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# Abstract

Critical thinking skills, I argue, may empower youth to function effectively in a global environment. They can apply critical thinking in daily life, at work, and in their communities.

This research aimed to examine Filipino elementary social studies teachers' experiences and application of critical thinking and to determine whether they engaged students to cultivate critical thinking skills. The study also investigated whether the Philippine educational system, as manifest in prescribed materials, works to promote students' development of critical thinking skills.

The study's data were collected through classroom observations of and interviews with social studies teachers—three in rural settings and two at an urban site. The 2002 edition of the Philippine elementary social studies curricular document was scrutinized, as were other social studies resources prescribed by the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), to find evidence of institutional promotion of and resistance to critical thinking training.

The collected data were analyzed by means of a qualitative methodology, grounded on interpretive inquiry. The information gathered was woven together and was presented herein as narratives.

The views expressed by teachers in rural and urban locales were compared. Teacher-participants were unclear what constituted critical thinking, though they affirmed the importance of its application in class. Before teachers

can teach critical thinking, however, they must be critical thinkers themselves. Teachers' calls for training to effectively cultivate critical thinking in students were consistent. Economic poverty and the paucity of educational resources, supports, and training, hampered instructors' attempts to develop and apply the skills.

The study was significant because it helped Filipino elementary social studies teachers realize the need to understand critical thinking's aims and processes. The study heightened instructors' awareness of how Filipino youth armed with critical thinking skills may be better equipped to address the effects of colonization and globalization in this age of economic interdependency. Finally, it is anticipated that the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports, after reading the findings and recommendations of the study, would make a concerted effort to promote critical thinking in Philippine schools.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My doctoral thesis is an expression of my concern for the plight of the Filipinos. The seed of this concern was planted long ago by my late father through his commitment to bringing about appropriate development for the people of Basey. I was moved to follow his efforts with my own work.

Inspiration, however, was not enough; I needed the guidance and direction of my supervisor, Dr. Susan E. Gibson, to clarify and define my work. I am grateful for her enriching tutelage. I neither lacked motivation, nor was I overwhelmed by the workload. Dr. Gibson, together with the other members of my supervisory committee: Dr. Amy von Heyking and Dr. Makere Stewart-Harawira, to whom I am also indebted, challenged my thinking and brought me to innovative paths that would not have been explored otherwise. Their questioning allowed me to push myself and to continually refine my research and writing. I would also like to thank Dr. Roberta McKay for seeing me through my oral examination. Her suggestions and assurances boosted my confidence, and made me better prepared to defend my thesis.

My examining committee, composed of Dr. Ali Abdi, Dr. George Richardson and Dr. Maxine Stephenson, graciously provided my study the privilege of their wisdom through their critical review of my paper. For their knowledge and expertise, I am thankful.

The guidance and expertise would have been for naught without the invaluable contributions of the Filipino social studies teachers, who willingly participated in my investigation. Credit is also due to the participants' administrators and to the personnel of various offices of the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports for allowing me access to the teacher-participants.

My own school administration, as well, played an important part in this study. I appreciate the opportunity afforded me by the Edmonton Public School Board by letting me go on a sabbatical leave of absence from my teaching assignment for a year. I was able to fulfill the residency requirement of, and complete my doctoral program.

My graduate work was a family endeavour. My youngest son, Byron, constantly provided technical assistance, even throughout his final exams. My oldest son, Brendon, always lent me a grammatical, stylistic and critical acuity. My husband, Gordie, never failed to believe that I can make a difference for the Filipinos. Their support and encouragement kept me focused.

Many thanks to all those who helped nurture the seed of my inspiration into the expression that it has become.

# DEDICATION

To my “boys”—Gordie, Brendon and Byron,
who share my passion for Basey.

# Prologue

## *Coming to a Realization*

Every night, after dinner, my parents used to sit in their rocking chairs on the balcony of our ancestral house, facing the sea, to discuss daily events. It was during one of those nightly conversations in Basey, Samar, Philippines, my first home, that I overheard my father, who was then a member of the Basey Municipal Council, passionately oppose the establishment of Basey Wood Industries (BASWOOD) in Rawis. Although at the time I did not understand the ramifications of such an industry, I did know that the company was going to harvest trees in the Samar rainforest.

Samar is the third largest island in the Philippines. It had an estimated population of 1.4 million, as of 1990. One of Samar's most notable characteristics is that it houses "the widest, contiguous forest formation that contains some of the oldest trees . . . found in Western and Eastern Samar, notably the Basey-Sohoton-Borongan area" (Tandaya, 1995, p. 9). The trees found in the Samar rainforest are so durable that they can withstand strong winds and typhoons. Tragically, the entire forests of Samar had been licensed to commercial loggers for exploitation, resulting in a massive population displacement. Traditional ways of living, including upland rice farming and the gathering of rattan (a shrub used as a raw material for furniture), were displaced by logging. Rawis, a barrio located about 10 kilometres northeast of Basey, was one of the bases used by the commercial loggers. After about ten years of operation, the logging company based in Rawis, and those in other parts of

Samar, pulled out of the area, leaving the entire island with a forest cover of only 26.7 percent. This is far from the 40 percent of forest cover required to keep an area safe for living (Tandaya, 1995).

For about 10 years, people flocked to Rawis for employment and prosperity. The village that once had fewer than 200 people swelled into a boomtown of about 1,000–2,000. People there seemed to be partying all the time. Loud music blasting from stereos could be heard coming from all directions as one strolled along the streets. Noise generated by chainsaws used to cut trees seemed to be the coda for the stereo music. The streets were practically paved with thick sawdust, so it was inevitable that one would inhale it. But the people, blinded by their sudden affluence, did not mind or care about the pollution. They found nothing wrong with the presence of the logging industry in their village. Other than the bothersome sawdust that I inhaled and that would get into my shoes as I walked on the streets, I, too, did not understand the long-range, negative effects of denuding the rainforest nearby. At the time, the company provided jobs for the people and made political promises to replace every tree it cut through a company-sponsored reforestation program.

The company's promises were made about 40 years ago. The people's employment lasted for only10 years, and then they were abandoned to live by whatever meagre harvest they could get from their lands. The short-term benefits burned brightly, but quickly, and left a long trail of suffering in its wake. Rawis went back to a population of fewer than 200 people, although currently it has a population greater than 500. What remains are stories and experiences of dangerous floods that became all too common in Rawis. In 1988, after several days of rain, farmlands and villages were heavily flooded. Several villages were buried in landslides, 76 people died, and 60,000 families in 36 towns were displaced. On one of my more recent trips to the rainforest, I was pointed to a set of about 30 concrete steps. The steps started from the bank of the Golden River, a major river that runs outside the municipality, down to the elevation of one of the villages down the river from Rawis. I was horrified to learn that during the yearly monsoon rains, the water level would rise past the top of the stairs, and even beyond the village and all the way to the top of the blackboards of their classrooms. Teachers teaching in the villages closest to the rainforest often have to cancel classes because of the danger of flooding. A retired school administrator who used to visit the villages along the river to supervise schools told me about how nice it was to walk around the villages with the big tall trees that gave shade and healthy air. It is now excruciatingly hot in those villages because of lack of trees.

After the loggers left, the hills and mountains of Basey were almost bare. Only the small trees that could not be cut by the loggers remained. The promise of reforestation seemed to have disappeared along with the trees of the rainforest. It seemed that everyone was party to the destruction of the environment: government officials, forest rangers, the villagers and town folks, business men, ordinary citizens like myself, and so many more. We did not do anything to stop the environmental damage.

The Philippine government has, in the last ten years, established a logging ban that prohibits the cutting of trees, but only after all of the mature trees were harvested. Those who can afford it resort to the use of concrete. Because the creation of concrete requires the use of a lot of sand, the mountains and hills are mined, and rocks are taken from the seashores and sea floors to be ground up. In some instances, corals from the seas are harvested as raw materials. To make matters worse, the construction of a dam inside the rainforest has been proposed. Once again, it seems the destruction of natural resources and the equilibrium of nature faces little or no opposition. This will eventually cause further devastating environmental catastrophe.

The forest area is the location of Sohoton Natural Bridge National Park, which is an archaeological site. Many artefacts that date back to the Stone Age and Iron Age were discovered there. It is said to have been a dwelling place and a burial ground during the Stone Age. It has an intricate cave system where stalactites and stalagmites struggle to survive. These caves provided shelter and a bulwark for fighters who resisted the Spaniards and the Americans. It is sad that the lustre of the stalactites and stalagmites are being replaced by brown eroding soil filtered by the surface run-off that is a consequence of the lack of trees. Rocks from denuded mountains are washed into the riverbeds and streams. The artefacts are rapidly being washed away.

Recalling that night on the balcony, I can finally say I understand why my father objected so vehemently to commercial logging. I now share his passion. Surely something can and must be done to save our beautiful seaside town. In the insatiable quest for commercial profit, I hope that we do not banish ourselves from the Eden that was once our home. I would like to help empower the youth of Basey so that they may become aware of these environmental issues. In time, I hope that they will find a way to stop the destruction and will be in a better position to forge their own, less-destructive future.

My family and the Basaynons of Edmonton initiated a tree-planting campaign in Basey. (This project is now sponsored by the non-governmental organization Basaynon Katig-uban, USA & Canada.) We did this through the schools, with the help of teachers and students. We also solicited the help of the local Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which provided tree seedlings to every school child. Because elementary schools in Basey had asked us for sports materials, we promised to equip every school that generated a successful tree-planting project with sports equipment, such as volleyball sets, baseball sets, basketball sets, and other materials. Our campaign generated little response. The lack of response made me believe that the schools were happier to simply receive sports equipment than to contribute to the growing of trees and to witness the environmental care they could provide.

While it was understandable that children were eager to get materials they could use and that would meet an immediate need, the adults' complacency about their conditions was perplexing. From my perspective as a Filipino, the apathy of the Basaynons about pressing environmental issues could be attributed to a number of factors. One of them might be the colonial mentality that Filipinos developed as a consequence of the oppression inflicted on them by those that invaded and colonized the Philippines. The instructors' apathy might also be due to their dependency on industrialization, or it might be a consequence of structural violence. As an educator, it is my hope that as Filipinos become critical thinkers, they will become empowered to turn their apathy into positive action, thus allowing them to improve their circumstances.

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# Chapter 1

## *Introduction*

In this dissertation, I present an argument that in order to help mitigate the effects of colonization and globalization in the Philippines, Filipinos must become critical thinkers (Floresca-Cawagas & Toh, 1989). This is the premise that motivated me to undertake a study of critical thinking. I believe that having acquired critical thinking skills, Filipino youth can be empowered and better equipped to affect their circumstances positively, and they may be able to function knowledgeably in a global environment that tends to exploit the naïve and the ill informed. I believe that public education—despite its current inadequacies—is the catalyst for appropriate development in the Philippines because it can enable people to learn skills that may bring economic and social growth to the country. This thought is inspired by Dewey's claim about the function of schools:

> School is the essential distributing agency for whatever values and purposes any social group cherishes. It is not the only means, but it is the first means, the primary means and the most deliberate means by which values that any social group cherishes, the purposes that it wishes to realize are distributed and brought home in the thought, observation, judgment and choices of the individual. (Dewey, 1916 in Estioko, 1994, p. 9)

Because education prepares students for their eventual public and private lives, I argue that students need to be taught critical thinking skills so they are better prepared to fulfill their roles in a democracy—one where they can participate in necessary critical analysis and forge their own futures and the futures of their communities.

### *Do Teachers Understand What Their Students Must Learn?*

My study represents qualitative research about elementary social studies teachers' experiences with critical thinking in Philippines schools. I investigated elementary teachers' views on critical thinking as they incorporated it in the teaching of social studies in the Philippines. I wanted to determine if the curricular content of social studies was taught in a manner that provided children in elementary grades with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills. The following question provided focus for my research:

> What are elementary social studies teachers' experiences with critical thinking in Philippine schools?

The research aimed to identify Filipino elementary social studies teachers' perspectives on critical thinking. It attempted to confirm whether or not instructors taught critical thinking in the classroom in accordance with how they defined it. My study also examined whether or not the Philippine educational system, through the prescribed materials, promoted the development of critical thinking skills in its students.

Societies are changing rapidly and schools have to teach students critical thinking skills to help them hone the decision-making processes they will need to deploy to determine what strategies and opportunities are worth adopting and which need to be discarded. Schools must provide educational opportunities and training that effectively develop children's critical capacities that may, eventually, help them manage and ameliorate the impact of the changes that occur in their environment. With the development and application of critical thinking, students should be able to form their own views—views that will be supported by the intrinsic worth of foundational arguments (Wright, 2002). The development of critical thinking capacity within students can make teaching and learning interesting, and, ultimately, may empower youth to transform their realities into positive opportunities.

### *The Potential of Critical Thinking*

Ian Wright (2002) identifies several important rationales for teaching critical thinking:

- As citizens, we have to make decisions about who to vote for and what stance to take on issues.
- Understanding any discipline or subject requires that we understand and critique the claims made within that discipline or subject area. To do this requires critical thinking skills.
- We often confront conflicting claims, whether in science, history or the media. Critical thinking can help us sort out which claims are most credible.
- Without critical thinking, there would be little human progress.
- Critical thinking is useful when making personal decisions.

- Many of the problems we face are moral. It is better to think critically about these than to appeal to emotions, self-interest or the use of force.
- If we respect children and want them to become independent decision makers, then we should teach them how to think critically.
- The use of critical thinking helps empower people so they can reason well about problems and issues.
- Employers want people who can think critically.
- You are more likely to win arguments if you can reason well.
- If you can think critically, you are more likely to think about your own thinking and evaluate it. (p. 10)

To be able to act effectively in a democratic society, citizens need to be critical thinkers so they can participate and render their services useful to the community (Dewey, 1916). Education in a democracy must function to strengthen students' critical competencies. It must do so to prepare them to serve their society, and so that they may become informed and independent-minded persons. The goal of egalitarian and forward-thinking education is not to develop people who are the submissive subjects of an autocratic leadership, nor merely obedient servants who will fulfill the functions imposed on them from above. Education should develop responsible, critically thinking individuals who have the capacity for independent inquiry (Bigge, 1971).

If instructors want their students to be independent decision-makers, they must provide their students with opportunities to think for themselves, to evaluate and generate their own ideas. Teachers have to deliver the curriculum in such a way that it will promote critical capacities. Students must be respected for their abilities and not be considered the mere receptacles for ideas and rote knowledge. Students must not be denied their right to learn how to reason or to analyze their circumstances (Michaelis, 1988). The level of education and literacy exercised by a country's citizens will likely determine its progress and development. To be considered literate and numerate today, a citizen must be a critical thinker. The propensity of an enlightened populace is to rise above poverty, to improve its conditions, and to assume civic duties (Laboga, 1997).

Preparing children to assume their civic responsibilities is one of the goals of social studies education in democratic countries. An analysis of the social studies curriculum at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels in North America reveals that the primary task of building citizenship among citizens is addressed by the curricular content of social studies (Maxim, 1995; Michaelis & Garcia, 1996). However, I share the opinion of other authors such as Allman (1999), Paul (1993), who reason that the traditional concept of civic education that limits its purview to that of a particular national context is no longer acceptable. Many societies now demand a form of global education and co-operation that will address the problems of environmental pollution, the trafficking of drugs and humans, human rights abuses, militarization, and western hegemony, all of which need to be resisted and combated, which in turn requires some form of collaborative action (Bennett, 1990; Boulding, 1988). A nation needs citizens who are empowered, reflective, and who are critical thinkers in order to address these problems.

### *Social, Political and Economic Contexts of My View on Critical Thinking*

The Philippines has a history of foreign invasion. For four centuries, the country was under Spanish rule. After that, the Americans seized control; later the Japanese dominated the Philippines. The country eventually was given independence after the Americans liberated the Filipinos from the Japanese (Kaul, 1978; McCoy & de Jesus, 1982). During the foreigners' rule, the Filipinos had few or no rights, and they were continually made to believe their race was of a lower status. This attitude of disdain was eventually internalized by the people, who looked upon themselves as inferior. The country's educational system established during colonial times and, as in other colonized countries described by Sifuna (1990), discouraged critical thinking and self-reliance, thus cultivating docile and passive citizens endowed with an unquestioning attitude.

In time, the citizens acquired rights and freedoms, but the educational system remained unchanged. The Americans tried to impart democracy to the Filipinos, but its practice could not be exercised effectively as long as the country was under American control. At the time, United States President William McKinley assured the Filipinos of a better life through his "Benevolent Policy of Assimilation," which, paradoxically, instructed the military to extend U. S. sovereignty over the Philippines. American imperialism, too, thus involved itself in the educational system. It taught Filipinos obedience and conformity (Estioko, 1994). Because they could not act against their oppressors, Filipinos acquired a fatalistic view of the future—an influence of the Catholic religion propagated by the Spaniards. They were so subjugated that rather than do something about the abuses, they left their destiny to fate.

The colonization of the country has not yet dissipated. In fact, it has only been replaced by another form of control: globalization. Some authors argue that globalization is not only a process of economic integration, it is also the universalization and commodification of knowledge, technology, communication, culture, health care, heritage, genetic codes, and the natural resources of the land, forests, air, and water (Barlow & Clarke, 2002; Reiser & Davies, 1944; Smith, 2000).

Filipinos' expectations were raised by the promise that globalization would create a more prosperous and egalitarian world. Today, however, hopes have been dashed because modernization has instead instigated a larger economic disparity. Poor countries, such as the Philippines, have become poorer, and rich countries have become richer (Bello, 2002; Smith, 2000; Toh, 2001). The foreign economic capital provided to help the poor countries is attracted by the prospect of charging high interest rates. Debtor countries have little banking control over these funds, so financial capital is free to move in and out of the country by means of open trade policies. For the developing countries, payment of their debt interest alone is almost impossible. In order to repay their loans, debtor countries have to deprive their people of basic necessities. Growing quantities of raw materials, such as logs, minerals, and grain, are exported to earn foreign currency to cover the growing trade deficits. Vast tracts of farmland once planted with subsistence crops are used to generate cash crops that feed foreign traders, not the farmers who till the land. Unregulated global market practices cause the sacrifice of forests and vast tracts of land for short-lived trade benefits. The governments of poor countries radically cutback spending that reduces the availability of public and social services and that creates massive unemployment. The "structural adjustment" made by a government so it is able to repay its loans is often economically, socially, and ecologically disastrous for its citizens and national resources (Bello, Kinley & Elison, 1982).

As my understanding of the ideas and strategies for change advocated by Peace or Global Education increased through my work for my master's degree, I became more convinced that the provision of education to Filipino youth must address development issues (Basiga, 2004).

The marginalization of, and the blatant disregard for the Filipino peoples' rights have continued into the present day, long after gaining independence from imperial forces. The people are continually forced off their lands in the name of development. Western values are directly and indirectly imposed on them through the means of technology and trade, which gradually replace Filipino values and obliterate their cultural identity.

Although the country is now independent, it still receives a considerable amount of foreign aid in the form of loans. The Philippines, which used to be an exporter of rice in the 1960s, in recent years has been unable to feed its own populace because its productive and fertile lands—owned by the nation's elites and by transnational agricultural corporations (Dahm, 1991; Hayami, Quisumbing & Adriano, 1990, as cited by Miron, 1997)—are planted with cash crops, such as pineapples and bananas. Cash crop prices are fixed by Transnational Corporations (TNCs), which are more concerned with profits than with the welfare of local farmers. While corporations own or control vast farmlands, many citizens do not own land they are able to farm even for subsistence purposes. Agrarian reform programs in the country had been unsuccessful because they had been unaccompanied by agricultural support, such as irrigation systems, education about more productive farming techniques, farm loans, and other elements (Floresca-Cawagas & Toh, 1989; 1993). Similarly, the adoption of a mechanized chemical-intensive and fertilizer-dependent rice technology drove many small farmers to bankruptcy, while bringing windfall profits to farm machinery manufacturers, the fertilizer cartel, and the U.S. pesticide monopoly (Bello, Kinley & Elison, 1982).

The structural violence inflicted on farmers by the Philippine government is clearly illustrated in a press release issued by the IBON (Filipino symbol of freedom, not an acronym; a bird) Foundation, on February 21, 2001. IBON asserted that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo approved the importation of 554, 000 metric tons of rice from Vietnam, Thailand, China, and the United States. This move resulted in the price decline of locally produced grain and, in the long run, displaced local farmers who were not able to compete with the cheap, imported rice. The IBON Foundation stated, "Instead of directly addressing basic concerns of farmers like insufficient post-harvest facilities, farm-support programs, and the scrapping of the bogus agrarian reform program, Malacanang (the President's office) has perpetuated a cycle of import-dependency to offset the country's perennial rice shortage" (http://www.ibon.org/).

The current president was one of the signatories of the country's entry into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1995 that allowed the importation of rice and other agricultural products into the Philippines. This globalization policy, put in place by the Philippine leaders, has been detrimental to the entire country, not just to the farmers.

The economic structures of the country have been set up to continue the exploitation of local resources to benefit Transnational Corporations (TNCs), which seem to be the modern-day equivalent of the former colonial powers. A passage from the Foreign Investment Laws demonstrates this:

> REPATRIATION OF FUNDS
> [SALES PROCEEDS, PROFITS, DIVIDENDS, ROYALTIES, LOAN PAYMENTS, & LIQUIDATION]
>
> There are no existing restrictive regulations on the repatriation of funds related to BSP (Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas/Central Bank of the Philippines) registered foreign investments such as sales or divestment proceeds, profits, dividends, royalties, loan payments, and liquidation. (www.chanrobles.com/default8.htm)

The BSP (Central Bank of the Philippines) registration of foreign investments is necessary only in cases where the foreign exchange required to service the repatriation of capital and remittance of profits, dividends, royalties, loan payments, or liquidation proceeds is sourced from the banking system. Further, it should be emphasized that investments in government or listed securities, money market instruments, or bank deposits need not be registered with the BSP or with the designated custodian bank of the investor concerned. The Foreign Investment Laws of the Philippines make it easy for foreigners to do business in the country while generating little or no benefit for the host country, other than employing local people at exploitive wages. Foreign investors can siphon off, without restrictions, whatever savings and earnings they generate from the employment of highly qualified but underpaid local workers that often work in poor conditions.

The Philippine government encourages foreign domination by allowing foreigners ownership of up to 100% of a business in the country. This is enabled by the Act Liberalizing Foreign Investments passed in 1996:

> AN ACT TO FURTHER LIBERALIZE FOREIGN INVESTMENTS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 7042, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES
>
> [Republic Act No. 8179]
>
> SEC. 2. Sec. 7 of Republic Act No. 7042 is hereby amended to read as follows:

> Sec. 7. *Foreign investments in domestic market enterprises.* - Non-Philippine nationals may own up to one hundred percent [100%] of domestic market enterprises unless foreign ownership therein is prohibited or limited by the Constitution and existing laws or the Foreign Investment Negative List under Section 8 hereof.
>
> (www.chanrobles.com/default8.htm)

Unless a business is linked with the manufacture, repair, or storage of ammunition, lethal weapons, explosives, military ordnance, and other similar products, any non-Filipino can control 100% ownership of a given business. Although the amendment is supposed to improve the economic situation of the country—because, in theory—it entices the investment of foreign capital in the country, it may prove disastrous in the long run.

Globalization has become the economic trend in the world, such that everything must be liberalized and markets must be free. Neo-liberalists believe that globalized countries provide their citizens with boundless opportunities for prosperity and those that do not integrate into the free market will fall into financial crisis (Tujan, 1999).

Globalization underpins the *theory of interdependence,* which takes three forms (Martinussen, 1997). The first form is *demand dependence*, which points out that demand for a country's production is dependent on domestic consumers and, in part, foreign consumers. The industrialized countries are concerned with generating growth in domestic markets because this will trigger a demand for goods from the industrialized countries, which will eventually result in the shared growth of the countries involved. This has not occurred in the real world. Because underdeveloped countries are unable to compete with the huge capital and technological resources available in developed countries, economic growth has been asymmetrical in favour of developed countries.

The second form of interdependence suggests that industrialized countries are dependent on goods from underdeveloped countries because First World countries have no access to certain raw materials and that these are available only from Third World countries. This relationship has only resulted in the depletion of the Third World countries' natural resources.

Martinussen (1997) labels the third form of the theory of interdependence as *welfare dependence*. He explains that "different countries have different comparative advantages to produce individual products. . . . Each country's unique resources must be exploited in the best possible way in deference to other countries' comparative advantages. This way, the highest level of welfare will be achieved on a global scale" (p. 71). Not surprisingly, this praxis has again brought more gains to developed countries than to underdeveloped countries. Martinussen further declares that the theory of interdependence, which supports globalization, has raised concerns because it has been used to justify the flow of resources from developing countries to the wealthier countries.

The application of the neo-liberalist theory of interdependence has been devastating for Filipinos. Transnational Corporations (TNCs) control production and services in the Philippines. They manipulate government policies to their advantage and drive the local competitors out of business. TNCs in the Philippines have been involved in mining, logging, the production of energy, and the construction of highways. These businesses have been largely responsible for the irreversible environmental destructions in the country. Forests are denuded and people are unjustly bought out of their land when corporations build highways for easy access to their plants, factories, and tourist resorts, and to facilitate the transportation of products. Floods that are consequences of mining and logging activities wash away villages, kill villagers, and render the land unproductive. Sources of water are polluted by chemicals that drain from processing plants. People are displaced and water species are obliterated to pave the way for electricity generating dams. Witnesses testifying at an international people's tribunal made the following observations:

> We are at a loss on what to do; we have been forced to relocate so the dam could be built in our area, but we have nowhere else to go and the compensation offer is not just. We are being treated like chickens being driven away. We were forced to move because if we stayed, our houses would be demolished. Some of us received partial payment; some received no assistance at all. Ninety percent of the relocated families are still without stable sources of livelihood, in spite of their willingness to work. Now they have no means to support themselves, they cannot even afford to pay for their water and electric bills. We were better off in our former communities in the mountains. We could sustain ourselves

> through farming, gold panning, gathering forest products, fishing, gardening. In the resettlement site, we have very limited space to plant crops and have no place for our animals. We may be forced to do criminal activities just to survive. Robbery in the resettlement site is becoming common.
>
> http://www.irn.org/basics/ard/index.php?id=rivers.html

Such stories are commonly told by people whose homes, along the Agno River in the Cordilleran Region of the northern Philippines, have been destroyed to make way for a dam. "The relocation plan for the . . . citizens [removed] by the dam from their good farmlands and 'abundant natural resources base' [turn] out to be a social disaster . . . The relocation program [is] plagued by the lack of preparation of the resettled population for new livelihood, inadequate farm lots and poor soil, poor domestic water supply, and soil erosion" (Bello, Kinley & Elison 1982, p. 87). Despite their strong opposition to the dam's construction, the residents have no choice but to give up everything—their livelihood, their culture and their community life, and sometimes their dignity.

The government has acknowledged the importance of preserving the nation's natural resources and has made plans to protect the forests, national parks, fisheries, and coastal waters, and to control waste disposal, air and water pollution (World Bank 1993, cited by Miron, 1997). "However, these plans are often compromised in favour of attracting foreign firms to invest in the national economy" (Miron 1997, p. 37).

To prevent further ecological damage to the Philippine rainforests, and to minimize the adverse social and economic impacts experienced by the Filipino people, the development of critical thinking skills in student populations must be a curricular priority for social studies. I am convinced that critical thinking allows individuals to see and know what needs to be changed and to act in situations so that whatever needs changing can be changed. Any subject matter can be taught with the application of critical thinking strategies when students are required to engage in analytical, reflective, and evaluative thinking.

### *My View on Critical Thinking*

Paolo Freire inspires my view on critical thinking, particularly with his idea of *conscientization*. Cited by Allman (1999), Freire (1972) defines *conscientization* in this way:

> [It is the] process of developing critical/dialectal perception. It expresses the inseparable unity between critically acting to transform relations and the critical transformation of consciousness. In other words, it is only within the experiences of struggling to transform relations and the experience of the transformation that our critical consciousness can fully develop. (pp. 95–96)

Critical thinking is not only the recognition and acknowledgement that a problem exists; it also requires that one address the problem. Critical thinking is a transformative process that not only enables people to discuss their conditions, but also allows them to find a way to improve them through empowerment. It is, for example, the simultaneous confirmation of a flaw in the status quo and the action required to challenge and alter the status quo. The introduction of critical pedagogy in Philippine classrooms can prepare Filipino youth to confront colonization and globalization concerns.

My view on critical thinking is further encouraged by Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, and Peters (1997) as they suggest that critical pedagogy enables the exposure of life's exploitive and oppressive situations. Hence, educators can employ it in their effort to introduce democratic social values in their classrooms. Critical pedagogues not only censure the injustices of neo-liberal capitalism, they also call attention to the establishment of conditions for a new social and economic democracy through critical pedagogy in schools.

### *Filipino Views on Critical Thinking*

Critical thinking has not been promoted in Philippine classrooms. It is therefore not surprising that virtually no literature about critical thinking in the Philippine context was found in the review of related literature conducted for this study. Although the development of critical thinking is now one of the goals of elementary social studies education in the Philippines and is being encouraged as a course offering at college and university levels, actual teaching of the skill is not a common practice. My search revealed that no studies on critical thinking had been conducted at any level of schooling in the Philippines. Therefore, the data presented in this part of the study was drawn primarily from my personal experiences.

Critical thinking is not encouraged in Philippine classrooms because it is misconstrued in a number of ways; among these, it is perceived as a form of criticism that places blame or finds fault in an attempt to discredit someone's efforts. The features of critical thinking are also misconstrued as a sign of being difficult or a showy manifestation of superiority that puts others down—or simply as bad manners. This must be understood in the cultural context of the Philippines, where the characteristics of obedience and of being agreeable are valued and highly regarded. Consequently, students are likely to readily conform to a leader's—or the majority's—wishes, rather than make an effort to think critically about a position and present a disparate assessment. This is not to say, however, that Filipinos are incapable of thinking critically. It is quite acceptable for a person of authority to pass critical judgment on the action of a subordinate, as a parent would judge and correct a child's behaviour. But the opposite is not conventional or readily accepted. Critical thinking skills are acknowledged as adult skills and are not encouraged among Filipino youth, lest they grow up to be argumentative and non-conformist. In the Filipino culture, being pleasantly harmonious is considered to be a virtue that every child should possess.

The Filipino perspectives on critical thinking can be attributed to centuries of colonization and to the legacy of the Spanish friars' version of Catholicism. One of the aims of the Spanish conquest in the country was to spread Christianity. In the early years of the Spanish rule, Catholic religious orders wielded great power over the Filipino people. Over time, the majority of the Natives were converted to the Catholic faith. In exchange for their efforts in looking after the spiritual well being of the Filipinos, the religious orders were awarded vast tracts of land, which were previously owned and developed by the people. The friars enforced unpaid labour in lieu of taxes which were owed to them by their colonial subjects. The friars supervised various governmental services such as collection of taxes, running of schools, census, public works, charities and other political affairs. Their rule was oppressive such that their subjects were under their control from birth until death. The Natives who disagreed with them were witch-hunted and condemned as heretics and subversives (Chapman, 1987; Guerrero, 1971; Kaul, 1978). Guerrero (1971) describes the classic feudalism exercised by the friars, where the union of Catholicism and state permeated the colonial will:

> The pulpit and the confessional box were expertly used for colonial propaganda and espionage. The catechetical schools were used to poison the minds of the children against their own country…. Among the masses, the friars propagated a bigoted culture that was obsessed with novenas, prayer books, hagiographies, scapularies, the passion play, the anti-Muslim *moro-moro* and pompous religious feasts and processions. The friars had burned and destroyed the artifacts of pre-colonial culture as the handiwork of the devil and assimilated only those things of the indigenous culture which they could use to facilitate colonial and medieval indoctrination. (pp. 14-15)

The friars assumed an important role in the Spanish conquest by totalling controlling the parish life of the Filipino people through their quest for "God, gold and glory." During the Spanish regime, the intellectual lives of the Natives were also shaped by the friars, who educated students through the doctrines of the Catholic religion, consequently repressing their understanding and creativity, rather than cultivating and liberating them (Chapman, 1987).

The following passage written by Jose Rizal, the Philippine national hero who was executed by the Spaniards for supposedly inciting rebellion and for preaching sedition, describes the effects of the country's Hispanization.

> Then began a new era for the Filipinos; little by little they lost their old traditions, the mementos of their past; they gave up their writing, their songs, their poems, their laws in order to learn by rote other doctrines which they did not understand, another morality, another aesthetics from those inspired by their climate and their manner of thinking. Then they declined, degrading themselves in their own eyes; they became ashamed of what was their own; they began to admire and praise whatever was foreign and incomprehensible; their spirit was dismayed, and it surrendered. (Cited by Kaul, 1978, pp. 6-7)

Rizal's account above also explains the negative impacts of colonization by other countries on the Filipinos.

For a country where social and economic problems have stemmed from colonization and globalization, it is not surprising that the development of critical thinking skills is discouraged in its populace. The absence of relevant literature and the dearth of studies on critical thinking in the Philippines may justify the need for this study.

### *Critical Thinking in Social Studies in the Philippines*

Due to the westernization of Filipino culture, and in response to the globalization of the country's markets, industries, physical labour resources, natural resources, and economy, I argue that the populace must become critical in its thinking. Critical thinking can be efficiently promoted through education, particularly in social studies education. The curriculum design adopted by the 2002 social studies curriculum, issued by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, which integrates social studies with arts, music, and physical education, focuses on citizenship education.

Social Studies is composed of the following subjects:

- Civics and Culture; Geography, History, and Civics
- Music, Arts, and Physical Education
- Home and Livelihood Education
- Good Manners and Right Conduct (Department of Education, Culture and Sports, 2002, p. 2).

The curriculum's integration of these disciplines made me assume that Philippine curriculum developers believe individuals who develop well-rounded physical, social, academic, and personal faculties are socialized for "good" citizenship in a democratic society. This objective is in keeping with the general aims of Philippine education found in the country's constitution—which "are designed to accelerate individual growth or self-discipline, social growth, and economic development of the [country]. It is also the purpose of . . . education to attain a high moral regeneration and improve the people's character, attitudes, and habits necessary in national development" (Gregorio & Gregorio, 1976, p. 175). Social studies draws from other fields of study to make the students' learning experiences meaningful. Good citizenship means taking on responsibilities to protect one's individual rights and freedoms and those of an entire community, participating in creating and evaluating public policies, and being just and law abiding (Parker, 2001).

Good manners and right conduct, or character, education used to be a separate subject taught in Philippine schools. The 2002 social studies curriculum, however, integrates character education through the development of citizenship values that bring people together as one and serve as guidelines about how Filipinos interact with each other. Some of the values include the following: justice, honesty, respect, loyalty, equality of opportunity, human worth and dignity, and patriotism. These values give Filipinos a common ideology upon which their social and civic lives are based.

While Philippine social studies courses seek to prepare Filipino youth for life in a democracy, it puts emphasis on, and provides little direction about, the development of critical thinking. One of the goals of the integrated curriculum indicated in the social studies curricular document is the development of "critical and creative thinking towards responsible decision-making on issues that are encountered" (Department of Education, 2002, p. 2). It is clearly mandated that elementary social studies teachers teach critical thinking to their students. However, determining whether or not this transmission actually occurs in classrooms was one of the main objectives of my study. My teaching experience in the Philippines and a general examination of the skills listed in the curriculum revealed little or no attempt were made to develop any of the critical thinking skills.

### *Significance of the Study*

The study is significant because it may have brought to teachers' awareness that critical thinking provides tools of the mind, which one needs to think through anything and everything that requires thought in life (Paul & Elder, 2006). It tried to make the participants become cognizant that critical thinking, according to Paul (1993) is central to global social, economic development and prosperity. "Critical thinking is the essential foundation for adaptation to the everyday personal, social, and professional demands of the 21st Century and thereafter" (p. v).

The study may have encouraged teachers to become critical thinkers themselves: to discover their own thinking processes and their implications. In doing so, they would be in a better position to impart the skills to their students.

The lack of literature and the absence of studies on critical thinking in the Philippines, as I found out in my search for related literature, also made this study important.

### *My Boundaries*

The study was delimited to six teacher-participants, who were teaching Grade 6 social studies in the Philippines. Grade 6 teachers were chosen because it is at this grade level that social studies is departmentalized; one teacher is assigned to teach the subject in a number of classes.

For purposes of comparison and contrast in the study, three of the six participants were social studies teachers who taught in rural areas, while the other three taught in an urban setting, although one teacher withdrew from the study. An examination of the Philippine social studies curriculum was undertaken. This was delimited to the recently developed curriculum of 2002. Other social studies resource materials issued free of cost to school districts and prescribed by the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports were also reviewed, such as textbooks and the teacher's manual.

### *Factors of Influence*

The study's methodology considered the values, practices, and beliefs of the participants so that I could conduct the research without causing offence to anyone. It "approached cultural protocols, values, and behaviours as an integral part of methodology" (Smith, 2001, p. 15). While conducting the study and analyzing the data, I was both an "insider" and an "outsider" (Griffith, 1998). Griffith cites the controversy over the relationship between the researcher and the participants of the research from various contexts. She argues that different groups such as people with disabilities, gay and lesbians, women and indigenous peoples resent the intrusion of researchers who belong outside of their communities. She points out that a research that studies the experiences of marginalized groups should be conducted by people within their community because an outsider researcher can not truly understand nor can s/he represent the experiences of the participants.

Although I had given up my Filipino citizenship, I had never ceased being a Filipino. I understand the hopes and aspirations of those in the Philippines who are struggling for a better future for themselves, their children and their families. As an advocate of Filipinos, I have supported a number of initiatives that addressed poverty and social injustice in the Philippines. While conducting my study, I considered myself as an insider researcher who shared the experiences of the teacher-participants, especially because I taught in the public and private school systems in the Philippines. For example, I heard my own voice in the stories of the participants as they relayed their frustrations about the lack of government support. I could imagine the teacher over extending herself in trying to reach all the students in her large class. I could feel the pressure exerted on teachers to cover the large number of topics in preparing their students for the year-end achievement tests with little or no resources to help them. Poor physical conditions of classrooms and lack of teacher-training were other constraints teachers faced. Our common experiences put me in a unique relationship with my study's participants; such a relationship is the essence of an interpretive inquiry (Nielsen, 1990, cited by Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

However, because I was the researcher, I was considered an outsider. Razavi (1992, in Bridges, 2006) claims that, "By virtue of being a researcher, one is rarely a complete insider anywhere…" (p. 161). As an outsider, however, I was able to offer a disparate perspective to some of the participants' experiences. Barone (1992), cited by Bridges (2006) elaborates on this point:

> People from outside a community clearly can have an understanding of the experience of those who are inside that community. It is almost certainly a different understanding from that of the insiders. Whether it is of any value will depend among other things on the extent to which they have immersed themselves in the world of the other and portrayed it in its richness and complexity; on the empathy and imagination which they have brought to their enquiry and writing; on whether their stories are honest, responsible and critical. (p.3)

Although I consider myself to be an insider and a member of the Filipino community, I was careful not to assume an "expert role," and to conduct the research with humility and respect. With my outsider's eye, I looked at some of the participants' stories in a different light.

The findings of the study focused on the views expressed by the teacher-participants, which were obtained through interviews. My interpretation of the responses and the data gathered through observations might have generated bias in the results. The participants' perspectives were recorded in the contexts of their situations and experiences. The findings were confined to the specific setting of each participant and were not generalized to other areas. I have an excellent command of the Filipino national language; nevertheless, some of the nuances of the Filipino language might have been lost in the process of translating the transcripts, and parts of the artefacts from Filipino to English. The process might have further prejudiced my interpretation of the documents.

### *Playing by the Rules*

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines set by the University of Alberta in the "University Standards for Protection of Human Research Participants." The participants willingly and voluntarily took part in the study, which was indicated in their signed consent forms. All participants were informed in writing of the nature and the significance of the study, and the extent to which the collected data would be used. They were free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Participants were guaranteed anonymity during the gathering and reporting of data. The names of the participants, principals, and schools were not identified in the publication of the study's findings. Participants were given an opportunity to review, amend, or delete audio/video recordings and transcribed comments before the publication of results.

### *Summary*

This study investigated Philippine elementary social studies teachers' understanding of critical thinking and verified how they engaged the students in their classrooms in a manner that promoted the cultivation of the skill. As students become critical thinkers, they can participate in community decisions and thus take positive, appropriate actions for themselves and for others in the country. I suggest that effective critical thinking skills can be instrumental in addressing and abating the detrimental effects of colonization, and inappropriate development brought about by globalization. The development of critical thinking skills may "enable people to act more strategically in ways that may change their context for the better" (Allman, 1999, p. x). However, teachers can only empower their students if they themselves are empowered. According to Giroux (1988), teachers are transformative intellectuals whose responsibility is to provide students with the opportunity to develop critical reflection and action that would give them the courage to struggle against economic, political, and social injustices. My conviction of the need to foster critical thinking among Filipino youth is equalled by my faith in the teachers who carry out that undertaking.

The dissertation is structured as follows:

The *Prologue* describes the inspiration of my study; followed by the statement of the problem and the rationale of the study in Chapter 1, *Introduction*. Chapter 2, *Literature Review* informs the study through the various related literature that were reviewed. Chapter 3, *Research Methodology* explicates the data collection and data analysis methods used. Materials prescribed by the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports and school district achievement tests in social studies are examined in Chapter 4, *Review of Artefacts*. Chapter 5, *The Participants' Stories* contains the data of the study—the narratives of the participants, while the analysis of the participants' stories is presented in Chapter 6, *Interpreting the Participants' Stories.* My recommendations and my final thoughts are offered in Chapter 7, *Recommendations and Final Reflections.*

# Chapter 2

## *Literature Review*

Literature related to this study was reviewed for a number of reasons: to justify the current study, to extend past research, to address a population that had not yet been studied, to avoid duplicating research that already exists, and to gather key elements from other research (Creswell, 2002). Suggestions about research design that was common to the area of study, scholars of the topic, and relevant facts and discussions about the subject of research were provided by the related literature (Mauch & Birch, 1998). The current study benefited from a literature review for all the reasons earlier stated.

In reviewing the substantive literature related to my study, I felt it necessary to categorize it into various sub-topics. A range of definitions of critical thinking that enhanced the analysis of data were offered by a number of authors. Critical thinking was compared with higher-order thinking skills in an attempt to better define its nature. Fundamental issues in the literature were presented through the Filipino views and my own perspective of critical thinking. Finally, previous studies in the field were examined to shed light on how their findings had bearing on my own study, which, most importantly, helped frame and structure my study.

### *Definitions of Critical Thinking*

Critical thinking is defined in a number of ways: as a way of thinking akin to social philosophy (Seiler, 2005), as a set of skills that comprise higher order thinking (Beyer, 1985), as a set of processes, and as a set of procedures

(Bailin, Case, Coombs & Daniels, 1999). However, only the first two ways are pertinent to this dissertation. In its social philosophy mode, critical thinking is inspired by the critical theory developed by the Frankfurt School of Social Theory, founded in the 1930's in Germany. Kanpol (1994) outlines the early thrust of the Frankfurt School this way:

> World War II propelled the Frankfurt School (which included a handful of German intellectuals who viewed the atrocities of the wars with both anger and disdain) to its most critical points of society. In short, the Frankfurt School sought out a new moral social order, a social emancipation from the various economic, social, and cultural oppressive qualities, such as social prejudices and economic inequalities. (p. 29)

Critical theory describes a society's relationship with its economy. In education, for example, critical theory explains how students are divided into low-, middle, and upper-class categories according to their parents' economic standing. This categorization predicts which students will fail to acquire and which will successfully attain "cultural capital"—the knowledge, skills, and values that carry and reflect social worth. While critical theory literature asserts that schools now produce unequal social relations in terms of race, gender, and class, critical theorists (Bowles & Gintis,1976; Willis, 1977) argue that alternatives to oppressive educational systems should be established so that schools work towards securing equal opportunities for all students.

Critical theory is defined as "any theory of society or social life that distinguishes itself from scientific theories of society by a willingness to be critical as well as factual" (Lemert, 1997, cited on p. 24 by Scott & Usher, 1999). As such, critical theory is the basis of critical pedagogy, the aim of which is emancipation. Scott and Usher make the point that the crucial, and critical, objective of this pedagogy is that "it does not simply seek to generate knowledge of the world as it is but to detect and unmask beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice, and democracy" (1999, p.30) and then works to engender freedom, justice, and democracy. A similar view of critical pedagogy is held by Apple (1982), Freire (1978), Giroux (1988), Kincheloe (2004), and McLaren (1989). They counsel teachers to become critical educators who speak out against political, economic, and social injustices, and that they should do so within and outside their classrooms. Critical pedagogy is concerned with the alleviation of human suffering by identifying and opposing the causes of oppression. It encourages teachers and students to challenge undemocratic and unequal practices through transformative social action and to seek out alternative practices that are more egalitarian. The pedagogy develops strategies that mitigate the effects of globalization by teaching students skills to empower them (Kellner, 2005; Lankshear, Peters, & Knobel, 1996).

To focus now on critical thinking as a set of skills, S. Norris (1985) describes them in his article "Synthesis of research on critical thinking," as "deciding what to do or believe . . . assessing the views of others and one's own views according to acceptable standards of appraisal . . . [and] conceiving of alternative courses of action and candidates for belief, before critically appraising which alternative to choose"(Norris, 1985, p. 40). Each of these steps represents a particular skill that makes up the larger skill set: critical thinking. Norris's article provides a brief summary of several research undertakings and authoritative opinions on critical thinking that led me to related literature.

Similar definitions of critical thinking were collected from a number of authors, including D'Angelo, Freely, Giroux, Glaser, and Russell. These contributions are presented by Beyer (1985) in his article "Critical thinking: what is it?" Freely (1976) states, "Critical thinking is the judging of statements based on acceptable standards" (p. 3). For Russell (1956), "critical thinking is the skill of examining . . . materials in the light of the related objective evidence, comparing the objective or statement with some norm or standard, and concluding [with] or acting upon the judgment then made" (p. 285). Similarly, Glaser (1941) says, "critical thinking calls for a persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p.16). D'Angelo (1971) defines critical thinking as the skill of "evaluating statements, arguments, and experiences" (p.7), while Giroux (1978) considers "an effective thinker [to be one who] seeks to identify the set of filters through which [authors] view information, select facts . . . [and] define problems" (p. 298).

Each of these author's definitions is a variant of the others' in the sense that each explanation is judged against a certain norm or evidence. Yet each is distinct because every description offered involves a different skill. The authors' statements do illuminate some of the significant proficiencies involved in critical thinking. Beyer (1985) efficiently defines critical thinking as it is expressed by a number of educators, he specifies associated abilities, and he clarifies the characteristics of skills that are operational in critical thinking. Beyer then asserts that critical thinking skills accomplish these tasks:

- Distinguish between verifiable facts and value claims
- Determine the reliability of a source
- Determine the factual accuracy of a statement
- Distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, claims, or reasons
- Detect bias
- Identify unstated assumptions
- Identify ambiguous or equivocal claims or arguments
- Recognize logical inconsistencies or fallacies in a line of reasoning
- Distinguish between warranted or unwarranted claims
- Determine the strength of an argument (p. 272)

As a set of skills, critical thinking refers to cognitive and intellectual processes that are evaluative and analytical in nature; critical thinking as a philosophy, on the other hand, is aligned with social consciousness that, when applied practically in the classroom, becomes critical pedagogy. Critical thinking skills are, in essence, higher order thinking skills; critical pedagogy is the teaching process that encourages students to evaluate social conditions and to then identify steps that can be taken to seek fairness, justice, and emancipation (Kanpol, 1994; Kincheloe, 2005). Shapiro presents a distinction between critical thinking and critical pedagogy as follows:

> The term *critical thinking* very often in the culture, and particularly around schools today, is used to denote a very strictly intellectual task. That is a capacity to problem solve, to develop the capacity for analytical thinking on the part of students, to perhaps be able to analyze things in different ways and reach different conclusions. . . . But the kind of criticality you will find in critical pedagogy is really . . . about focusing our critical capacities, our questioning capacity, on the everyday world in which we find ourselves with a purpose. And that purpose is rooted in moral vision. It has to do with looking at the world, questioning the world as to whether, in fact, it treats people with dignity and respect; whether the world is one in which certain groups of people or individuals are limited or dominated, or whether the world that we live in, in fact, lives up to its democratic and humanistic promises. . . . I guess one way to see this is that a critical consciousness really, I think, puts those critical capacities to work in some real way. (p. 168)

Critical thinking skills are cognitive skills that are put to work in the framework of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy provides a venue for the application and refinement of critical thinking skills to pave the way for the development of social consciousness.

Critical pedagogy not only advocates for social change, it also fosters critical thinking: "Freire always maintained that pedagogy has as much to do with the effort to change the world as with developing rigorous forms of analysis. In other words, critical pedagogy is not only interested in social change but also in cultivating the intellect of teachers, students, and members of a larger society" (Kincheloe, 2004, p. 21). Critical thinking, when trained and focused by critical pedagogy, is a process that develops self-awareness, a liberated mind, and a critical consciousness. Ideally, critical pedagogy and critical thinking combine such that "[f]or teachers to act in an emancipatory manner involves empowered actions—activities that contribute to the best interests of students, community members, and other teachers[,] and conduct that enables those affected to employ their intelligence and ethics" (Kincheloe, 1993, p. 26).

### *Critical Thinking and Higher-Order Thinking Skills*

Critical thinking is often associated with thinking skills and higher-order thinking skills. Newmann (1991, p. 325) defines higher-order thinking as the "challenge and expanded use of [the] mind, [while] lower-order thinking represents routine, mechanistic application, and limited use of [the] mind." Higher-order thinking occurs in activities such as interpreting, analyzing, and manipulating information. Lower-order thinking, on the other hand, involves repetitive routines. Activities such as listing information from memory, inserting numbers into previously learned formulae, and recalling facts are categorized as lower order thinking.

Beyer (1985) claims that one major school system, the Los Angeles Unified School District, asserts that critical thinking is a major category for all thinking operations, such as comparing/contrasting, distinguishing facts from opinion, formulating relevant questions, observing, classifying, generalizing, predicting, and defining. Other authors, Beyer reports, equate critical thinking with Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. Some educators also refer to critical thinking as the "thinking process," "metacognition," "critical reflection," or "reflective thinking." The term *reflective thinking* is drawn from Dewey's notion of reflective thought, which he understands as the "Active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends" (Dewey, 1933, p. 9). While Beyer (1985) lists the operational skills that make up critical thinking, Dewey (1916) outlines the components and processes involved in reflective thinking. They are as follows:

- Perplexity, confusion, [and] doubt, because one is implicated in an incomplete situation whose full character is not yet determined;
- A conjectural anticipation—a tentative interpretation of the given elements, attributing to them a tendency to effect certain consequences;
- A careful survey (examination, inspection, exploration, analysis) of all attainable considerations [that] will define and clarify the problem at hand;
- A consequent elaboration of the tentative hypothesis to make it more precise and more consistent, squaring it with a wider range of facts;
- Taking one's stand upon the projected hypothesis as a plan of action [that] is applied to [an] existing state of affairs; doing something overtly to bring about the anticipated result, and thereby testing the hypothesis. (p.176)

It is apparent that authors and educators have nuanced and individualized interpretations of what elements constitute critical thinking, and they do not all agree on all points. However, their definitions have certain elements in common. Beyer's and Dewey's characterization of the nature of critical thinking, for example, both presume a certain mind set that a person must adopt before engaging in critical thinking. Both proponents, together with other educators, agree that critical thinking is active, is evaluative in nature, and involves a certain amount of scepticism. Critical thinking involves a few operations that can be used independently or that can be combined with other operations (Duplass & Zeidler, 2000).

To provide a clear differentiation between critical thinking and other thinking skills, and to define the distinct features of critical thinking, it is important to guide teachers, themselves, to identify and employ specific critical thinking skills as they teach their students. Substituting other thinking skills for critical thinking skills can mislead educators into believing they are teaching appropriate skills when in fact they are not. This means that students miss out on opportunities to learn to think critically.

### *Studies on Critical Thinking among Youth*

Though published in 1941, an experiment conducted by Glaser, "An experiment in the development of critical thinking," is still acknowledged for its relevance to recent studies. Glaser developed materials for use by teachers of upper elementary, secondary, and college students to encourage critical thinking. The materials' efficacy was evaluated in the same investigation.

Glaser also attempted to determine if a relationship existed between the ability to think critically and other factors, such as intelligence, reading ability, patterns of interest-values, home background, and sex. He sought to determine, too, whether or not these factors were significantly associated with the amount of gain on critical thinking tests demonstrated by students after they received special instruction in critical thinking.

A series of tests, which included the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Test and the Watson–Glaser Tests of Critical Thinking were administered to four Grade 12 English classes, an experimental group, and to four additional Grade 12 English classes that constituted the control group. While the control group received the standard Grade 12 lessons in English class for ten weeks, the experimental group was subjected to special instructions derived from lessons created to stimulate critical thinking. After ten weeks, the two groups were tested once again and their test results were analyzed. The analysis showed the experimental group tested significantly higher on the composite score. This supported the conclusion that such lessons can effectively aid the development of critical thinking. Among the 27% who scored high and the 27% who scored low, age, sex, home background, and scores on the Interest–Values Inventory were not found to be significant influential factors. Students whose IQs were assessed to be lower than 100 in the pre-test of the Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Test were among those who showed the most gain from the lessons. Six months after a return to normal instructional practices, the improvement gain in the ability to think critically was still observable in student behaviour and in retest scores. The major objective of the study—that is, to prepare instructional materials that could effectively develop critical thinking skills—was successfully accomplished.

The Watson–Glaser Tests of Critical Thinking Skills, the assessment instrument used in Glaser's pioneering research, served as a reference for formulating interview questions for the qualitative inquiry I undertook. It should be noted that the study was criticized by Fawkes, Adajian, Flage, Hoeltzel, Knorpp, O'Meara, and Weber (2001), for its emphasis on the preparation of materials for teaching critical thinking rather than determining how, why, and by what means students drew conclusions about contemporary issues.

Janis Martin (1973) presented a quantitative study of critical thinking, cited by Cotter (1951), which explored the relationship between Piaget's and Vygotsky's stages of cognitive development in children. The material appears in her dissertation, "A comparison of the developmental stages proposed by L. S. Vygotsky and J. Piaget." Martin studied 104 children between 4 and 16 years of age, all of average intelligence. They all attended school at appropriate grade levels, and none had a history of neurological or emotional difficulties. Piaget's model of cognitive development and Vygotsky's model of conceptual development were administered to each child to determine each participant's cognitive level within both systems. The results were then correlated for the 104 children.

The basis of the Piagetian model was a child's speech cognition, perception, socialization, and moral principles, while Vygotsky used only one assessment instrument, called the *Vygotsky Block*, or the *Concept Formation Test*, to determine the conceptual level of the participants. One result of the study indicated that given a child's performance within the Piagetian model, one could predict the child's performance within the Vygotsky model. Both systems showed that children displayed significantly different performances at different age levels, which revealed disparate stages of sophistication in performance. However, an analysis of male and female performance showed no difference. The reliability of the study's results appears questionable, however, because the points of comparison differ greatly. Whereas Vygotsky used only one method to measure a child's conceptual level, Piaget devised a tool that measured a child's cognitive level across numerous tasks. There was no one-to-one correspondence for the items tested by both models. Although the two systems aim to assess the cognitive abilities of the participants, it cannot be determined conclusively that either test verified the critical thinking skills of the children. Although Piaget and Vygotsky are referred to as early proponents of the development of critical thinking, it appears their work focused more on higher-order thinking skills than on critical thinking.

French and Rhoder (1992) explore various thinking skills and strategies of teaching, which provide a framework for the development of the skills in the classroom. I referred to their work to help me distinguish the differences between problem solving and locating specific answers as strategies used in teaching critical thinking. Their work was also an invaluable resource which I used when I examined artefacts for this study. The teacher-training and assessment procedures they outlined could further help educators in preparing an intervention program that endorses critical thinking.

### *Critical Thinking in Social Studies*

Although fewer studies have been conducted on critical thinking in social studies than in other fields, such as in reading and in writing, some scholars have asserted that citizens who can think critically are necessary if democracy is to survive (Dewey, 1916). It is no longer sufficient to vote for a country's leaders every so often. Citizens must become aware of contemporary issues that affect their societies. Effective citizens must question government decisions when necessary and become participatory members of their communities (Sears & Parsons, 1991). Public conflict and political controversy are the major features of a democratic government in a multicultural society; consequently, citizens should be equipped with critical thinking skills (Newmann & Oliver, 1970; Oliver & Shaver, 1966; VanSickle & Hoge, 1991).

Articles written by Kownslar (1985) and Beineke (1985) emphasize the instruction of critical thinking in social studies. Kownslar claims that students who acquire critical thinking skills will do well in history and government courses and will excel in standardized entrance examinations. The skills, he believes, also have practical applications outside the classroom: students will apply them when they read newspapers, advertisements, or propaganda; when they listen to news broadcasts and political speeches; when they prepare to vote; when they decide whether or not to marry; when they seek to resolve controversial issues; raise children; and when they make other significant life decisions.

A search of the Thesis and Dissertation database yielded a quantitative study done on critical thinking in social studies by Katherine Cotter for her Ph.D. dissertation at Fordham University (1951). The study aimed to "determine the ability of the pupils in the sixth grade of the public schools of the city of New York to think critically in the social studies" (p. 3). The Wrightstone Test of Critical Thinking in the Social Studies, the Stanford Achievement Test in the Social Studies, and the Pintner General Abilities Test, Intermediate, Verbal Series, were administered to 774 sixth-grade pupils (414 boys and 360 girls) in five public schools in New York City. The tests were administered to determine the relationship between students' ability to think critically and their ability to retain facts in social studies. The study also set out to identify any significant differences between the participants' ability to think critically in social studies as determined by their sex. Participants were selected as representatives of low, average, and high socio-economic neighbourhoods in each of the boroughs of New York City. The research found that both boys and girls scored below the grade norm on the Test of Critical Thinking in Social Studies. Girls obtained an insignificantly higher mean score (by three months) than did boys. The investigation also showed there was a "substantial degree of relationship between the ability to think critically . . . and the ability to retain facts in the social studies" (p. 171). However, the validity of the measurement instrument used to assess critical thinking skills is questionable. The three parts of the Test of Critical Thinking in the Social Studies do not test for critical thinking; rather, they test for "obtaining facts, drawing conclusions, and applying general facts" (p. 221). This crucial characteristic is explicitly acknowledged by a recommendation made by Cotter to further study "the construction of a test of critical thinking in social studies, which places less emphasis on the various study skills and more emphasis on those items which call for the actual exercise of the reasoning process" (p. 172). The fact that the study was conducted in 1951 on sixth graders suggests that critical thinking has long been an educational focus, which may reinforce the value of developing critical thinking in youth, as early as the sixth grade. The study's related literature attributes the study of children's critical thinking to Vygotsky, Piaget, Taba, Glaser, and other proponents. It directs the reader's attention to 1928, when Piaget's *Judgment and reasoning in the child* was published in English.

### *Studies on Critical Thinking in Pre-service and In-service Teachers*

In order for teachers to teach critical thinking skills to their students, they must first be critical thinkers themselves. Teachers disseminate knowledge and serve as conduits between the practical and the theoretical worlds. Hence, it is important to learn more about teachers' perspectives on critical thinking. Two University of Victoria assistant professors, Court and Francis, conducted a study on *Teachers' Conceptions of Critical Thinking* to look into teachers' understanding and practice of critical thinking. The researchers felt that in order to "improve both pre-service and in-service teacher education, develop materials that will be helpful for teaching and evaluating critical thinking, and [to] begin to change some of the environmental factors that make schools infertile ground for critical thinking," it was necessary to know teachers' perspectives about critical thinking (1993, pp. 480–481). This particular study was part of a larger study conducted by the same researchers, in which 120 teachers completed questionnaires about critical thinking. Seventeen teachers of kindergarten through Grade 12 students, of the 120 respondents, agreed to be interviewed on the telephone. The interviews were conducted over six weeks and each interview took half an hour to complete. Seven elementary generalists and 10 high school teachers, nine of whom were male and eight were female, participated in the research. Of the high school teachers, four were English teachers, one was an English and Social Studies teacher, one was a Science and Computer Science teacher, one taught Business Education, one taught Industrial Education, and two taught Fine Arts. From the responses, four themes were identified: *attitude of open-mindedness, method that allows interaction, activities that involve problem solving, and argument.*

The findings of the investigation showed that although some teachers experience a "feeling of inadequacy" when assessing critical thinking, all interviewees expressed commitment and dedication to promoting critical thinking. They suggested that critical thinking could be taught without great expense. The strength of the study was its utilization of a wide sampling of participants from disparate teaching specializations, which reinforced the importance of teaching critical thinking in all subject areas. The study also demonstrated that teaching critical thinking does not have to be an isolated endeavour, because it can be facilitated in any field of study. The weak point of the study, however, lay in the methodology employed in gathering of data. It would have been a challenge to establish rapport with the participants and attempt collection of their information in a thirty-minute telephone interview, which might have skewed the data collected. Bogdan and Biklen acknowledge this point when they write, "Good interviews are those in which the subjects are at ease and talk freely about their points of view" (2003, p. 96).

A study about critical thinking in social studies was undertaken by Dinkelman (1999). It purported to study the "extent, nature, and development of critical reflection among three pre-service teachers in a semester-long secondary social studies methods course" (p. 329). Three students, enrolled in the social studies methods course, were randomly selected to participate in the study. Data were collected through a series of interviews held at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the semester. The students' work, participation in class, and their written assignments were also assessed, through observation, for evidence of reflective thinking. The study found all three participants demonstrated critical reflection, although not strongly pronounced, for the duration of the course. The moral and ethical foundations of their reflections were evident in practice. The students also acquired appropriate language to describe their critical reflection. The study concluded that there was potential for social studies methods courses to promote critical thinking, a skill that beginning teachers should acquire before entering the teaching service. I believe the study's recommendation is valid, in that those who enter the teaching profession should be encouraged to become critical thinkers and should possess critical thinking skills they can impart to their students.

McBride, Xiang, Wittenburg, and Shen (2002) undertook a similar exploration with a quantitative research project that analyzed pre-service teachers' dispositions towards critical thinking. The researchers examined and compared the critical thinking dispositions of 218 Americans and 234 Chinese pre-service physical education teachers. The 218 American participants, whose ages ranged from 20 to 25 years, represented nine universities in the United States. The universities were selected according to a geographic sample of physical education programs that included a methods course. The 234 Chinese participants were purposefully selected from the Shanghai Institute of Physical Education, because the researchers had limited access to Chinese students. Although the participants were not a true representation of either population group, they were matched to each other according to age, programme characteristics, and educational standing. The data collection and analysis instrument was the California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory, developed by Facione and Facione (1992). This instrument was based on the Triadic Theory, which comprises ability, sensitivity, and inclination, and was created by Perkins (1993). The results revealed that the American participants scored significantly higher than the Chinese students on 4 of 7 subscales, particularly on Critical Thinking Maturity and on Self-confidence. The findings for the three remaining subscales, "Analycity, Systematicity, and Open-mindedness," were not employed due to the low alpha coefficients generated by the Chinese sample. No differences were noted for the Inquisitiveness and the Truth-seeking subscales. I would have expected significant differences in the results of the two general samples of students from the two countries, due primarily to differences in cultures and values. It was predictable that the American students would score higher on most of the subscales, given that the measurement tool was based on North American assumptions and biases.

The need to develop critical thinking skills has been noted not only in the western hemisphere, but in other parts of the world, too. Salem Ali al-Qahtani (1995) explored the teaching of thinking skills in the social studies curriculum of Saudi Arabian secondary schools through qualitative research. He wanted to learn how thinking skills were taught in five Saudi Arabian secondary schools in the Abha Educational School District. Purposeful random sampling was used to choose the students and teachers who participated in the study. The teachers were classified into Group A—those categorized as "excellent" teachers—and Group B—or "medial" teachers—as rated by their supervisors. The teachers were interviewed and all had their classes observed five times to determine their perceptions of thinking skills, how successful they were in teaching the skills, and what factors contributed or impeded the teaching of thinking skills. Classrooms were observed to spot classroom activities that encouraged teaching of the skills. All teachers articulated the importance of teaching the skills, but all had some difficulty defining or listing specific thinking skills. Some teachers indicated that such skills involved knowledge of textbook contents; others stated the skills involved discussion of Islamic values.

There was also a disparity between the teachers' positive response to conducting activities that promote thinking skills and the actual application and practice of those skills in the classroom. Teachers mentioned a number of factors that impede the development of thinking skills, such as a standardized curriculum, pressure initiated by achievement tests, the passive attitudes of students, a lack of time, outdated textbooks, and a lack of resources. Informal conversation with students after class showed that students had raised levels of anxiety, as manifested in facial expressions, when asked thought-provoking questions. "Puzzlement" was considered a source of embarrassment. Nevertheless, the study recommended the inclusion of activities that promote thinking skills in classroom practices and a strong commitment on the part of all educational stakeholders to develop thinking skills. Although the investigation focused on the teaching of thinking skills, it is relevant to my study on critical thinking because critical thinking is one of the thinking skills. The interview questions shared at the end of the Al-Qahtani article prompt ideas about the kinds of questions one might ask in a related study. The researcher listed a number of scholarly works whose theories he used to analyze the data. However, I believe he would have been more effective if he had prepared or used a specific checklist based on the critical thinking skills listed by proponents such as Beyer (1987, 1988), Norris & Ennis (1989), and Paul (1993).

Chiodo and Tsai (1997) investigated secondary school teachers' perspectives about teaching critical thinking in social studies classes in Taiwan, an invaluable resource for my study. The study was both qualitative and quantitative, and it sought to verify the depth of inclusion of critical thinking in the teaching of social studies. Twelve secondary social studies teachers from three senior high schools and two junior high schools in Taiwan were interviewed, although only 11 sets of data were analyzed as a consequence of incomplete responses received from the twelfth participant. The participants comprised thee male teachers and eight female teachers, with a mean age of 36.5 years. Their individual teaching experience ranged from 2.5 to 24 years.

Questions were prewritten in English and Chinese, and each interviewee was given a choice of the interview language used. At the interview, participants were asked to rate the extent to which each of several teaching methods promoted critical thinking, and these were ranked on a five-point Likert scale. Observations of classroom activities were video taped to "identify teachers' instructional methods and to discover to what extent the methods promoted students' critical thinking" (Chiodo & Tsai, p. 5). Materials issued by the Ministry of Education, such as educational guidelines, senior high and junior high school curriculum criteria, teachers' brochures, textbooks, and teachers' manuals, were also analyzed. The findings showed that the teachers could not define what constitutes critical thinking, nor could they identify teaching strategies to develop the skill in their classrooms. Yet every teacher claimed he or she taught critical thinking. Repeated classroom observations revealed that activities that promoted critical thinking were not present in their teaching. Analysis of the results suggested that critical thinking is not favoured in Taiwanese schools. The reason for this, researchers determined, was that "the

Chinese culture in Taiwan strives for harmony and security. Questioning is viewed as opposing the accepted way of doing things; thus, it is not promoted by the educational system" (p. 6). The teachers also stated that time constraints prevented them from engaging in critical thinking activities in classes with approximately 50 students each. One participant claimed that at the grade level in question, the students did not need the skills, but that they would need them when they entered adulthood. Emphasis on passing the state exams for admission to post secondary schools was considered a significant impediment to the development of critical thinking skills because the exams were content-based and did not test for critical thinking. As a result, teaching critical thinking was not considered necessary. The knowledge component that had to be taught within the required curriculum was overwhelming, so no time was available for the development or application of critical thinking strategies. In China, teachers are instructed to assume a neutral position when it comes to addressing political issues; consequently, no political discussions ensued in classrooms. Furthermore, teachers' manuals do not include teaching strategies for the development of critical thinking and there is little accessibility to materials that promote critical thinking. The study emphasized the responsibility that schools have to develop critical thinking in students so that youth have associated advantages in later life.

I undertook a similar study of elementary teachers' perspectives on critical thinking in social studies in the Philippines. It was interesting to note that some of the values expressed by the Filipino teachers are similar to those of the Chinese. A highly centralized educational system is common in both countries. Similarities in cultural practices and beliefs are also found in Taiwan and the Philippines. My research methodology was also similar, although my study was entirely qualitative, and participants from rural and urban areas were interviewed.

### *Summary*

A review of related literature on critical thinking gave me the opportunity to examine the subject from a historical perspective. Several articles presented under the sub-topic *Definitions of Critical Thinking* defined the nature of critical thinking and clarified my view on the subject. The definitions differentiated critical thinking, which is based on critical theory, as a social philosophy (critical pedagogy), from critical thinking as a set of higher order thinking skills. Although seemingly dichotomous, both definitions are, in fact, inter-related because it maybe through critical pedagogy that critical thinking skills are developed, just as it maybe through critical thinking skills that critical theory is practised. From the findings of the studies reviewed under *Studies on Critical Thinking in Youth*, *Critical Thinking in Social Studies*, and *Studies on Critical Thinking in Pre-service and In-service Teachers*, I found that a number of tools were available for use to evaluate critical thinking, which also served as points of reference when I looked for critical thinking practices in the classroom. A review of the methodologies employed by various researchers, both quantitative and qualitative, supplied me with practical and evaluative ideas when I formulated guide questions and guidelines for analysis of data. The literature review I conducted informed my study and emphasized the instruction of critical thinking. The related literature, furthermore, helped me refine and conduct my own research on a similar topic.

# Chapter 3

## *Research Methodology*

Qualitative research grounded in interpretive inquiry was the methodology I used to gather and analyze the data in this study. I chose qualitative research because my inquiry lent itself to this methodology. The study's methodology agreed with Woods' (1999) view of qualitative research in that it focused in part on a teacher's "life as it is lived, things as they happen, situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, [the] moment-to-moment course of events" (p.2). The study was descriptive research that considered the literal setting and context of instruction to be the direct source of data. The research focused on meaning and process rather than on outcomes or products (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to generate a deeper understanding of the participants' realities in their own setting. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) describe the role of the researcher in a qualitative research:

> Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape the inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. (p. 8)

The inquiry involved an interaction between myself, as the researcher, and the participants and how we influenced each other. Ezzy (2002) compares the hermeneutic framework that I used to a "dance in which the interpretations of the observer and the observed are repeatedly interwoven until a sophisticated understanding is developed" (p. 25). To find out about the participants' perspectives on critical thinking, I became actively involved in interviews with teachers and in observing classrooms. Although people shared commonalties, participants' responses varied according to their realities, their experiences, and their personal visions of the social world (Guba, 1981; Locke, 1989).

The study utilized the interpretive inquiry paradigm, which favoured naturalistic forms of data collection. It used narratives and descriptives, and it sought understanding rather than statistical data. Hermeneutics, or interpretive inquiry, Gallagher (1992) states, "investigates the process of interpretation, the communication of meaning through a text, linguistic competence in conversation … [and] also deals with social processes, human existence, and Being itself" (p. 6). In order to provide a working concept of interpretive inquiry, the following definitions of hermeneutics were borrowed from Gallagher (pp. 3–4):

> Schleiermacher's definition—the art of understanding; an art or practice that relates discourse and understanding (*Verstehen*) to each other.
>
> Dilthey's definition—a critique of historical reason that formed the basis for the methodology of the human sciences; the art of understanding permanently fixed expressions of life.

Heidegger's definition—the existential, phenomenological analysis of human existence insofar as understanding is an existential-ontological characteristic of human beings.

Gadamer's definition—a theory that illuminates the conditions of possibility of understanding; to let what is alienated by the character of the written word or by the character of being distantiated by cultural or historical distances speak again.

Habermas's definition—an ability we acquire, to the extent to which we learn to master a natural language; the art of understanding linguistically communicable meaning and to render it comprehensible in cases of distorted communication.

These definitions highlight commonality in that they pair understanding and interpretation as they relate to language and text and, as such, become the subject of hermeneutics and interpretive inquiry. Ellis (1998a, pp. 15–16), in her presentation of three central themes of hermeneutics, incorporates most of these definitions and includes Smith's view. She expounds that the "first theme of interpretive inquiry is the creative character of interpretation," which should be generated holistically. The holistic process leads to the second theme, which involves "a playing back and forth between the specific and the general, the micro and the macro, because to understand a part, one must understand the whole, and to understand the whole, one must understand the individual parts" (Smith, 1991, p. 190). The third theme Ellis identifies is the condition set by language as a factor in constructing understanding of text. Language limits or enhances one's ability to interpret an author's intent. Because one's language is defined by the individual's historical epoch, and social and cultural context, language must be a central theme of hermeneutics: it directly affects the process of understanding.

Interpretive inquiry, according to Ellis, is a research process that is not concerned with seeking a "uniquely correct or 'accurate' interpretation, but rather the most adequate one that can be developed at the time… It is the search for an interpretation [that is] as coherent, comprehensive, and comprehensible as possible" (p.27). For the purposes of my research, Ellis's definition of interpretive inquiry was the referent definition because my study aimed to explore how teachers gave meaning to and expressed an understanding of their experiences with the teaching of critical thinking.

### *Choosing the Participants*

Initially, permission was requested from the Office of the Secretary of Education at the Department of Education, Culture and Sports in Quezon City, Philippines, to gather data from the elementary schools in Basey, Samar, and in Tacloban City, in the province of Leyte. I was, however, directed to seek permission from the Regional Office of Region 8, which covers Samar and Leyte. The forms that outlined written permission were later brought to the Division Superintendent's Office in Catbalogan, Western Samar, and to the Division Superintendent's Office in Tacloban City. The endorsement of the superintendent of Samar was presented to the school district supervisors in Basey, who chose the teacher-participants in the rural area. The endorsement from the superintendent of the Tacloban City schools was taken directly to the principals of three different city schools. They subsequently requested the participation of three Grade 6 social studies teachers. Although I had forms ready (See Appendices A, B, & H), to be sent out to parents/guardians and to students requesting permission to observe and video tape students during my classroom observations, permission was not solicited because school administrators felt that it was culturally inappropriate to do so. In the Philippine context, schools and their staff are esteemed and trusted, which give school personnel an unwritten permission from parents, generally allowing their children to participate in activities conducted in schools. The school administrators believed that requesting permission might undermine the confidence and respect community members bestowed on the schools.

My access to participants in the rural area was facilitated by one of the Basey district supervisors. Upon receiving the letter from the superintendent of schools of Western Samar, which I obtained with no difficulty, the district supervisor immediately communicated with the teachers whom she chose to participate in the study. She set up an appointment with the teachers so that I could meet with them to conduct the interview and the class observation. Every participant was sent a letter that explained my visit, the nature of my study, and how the data would be used. Because a new mandate, called "time on task," was recently disseminated to instructors by the central office in Quezon City, specifying that teachers should spend every minute of school time with the students, the district supervisor appointed a substitute who travelled with me from one school to another because two teacher-participants indicated an interview time scheduled during the regular teaching day.

The spirit of advocacy practiced by the district supervisor on behalf of the staff and students was heart warming, and I truly appreciated her efforts. In keeping with cultural protocol, the same caring district supervisor accompanied and introduced me to the Superintendent of City Schools in Tacloban City, who wrote three notes, each addressed to principals of different city schools requesting the participation of various teachers. Two of the city school principals accommodatingly set up interview and class observation schedules for the teachers and me.

The principal of a third school, however, was new to her position and showed little enthusiasm for allowing me to conduct my study in her school because of the "time on task" mandate. She had a staff member take me to the classroom of the Grade 6 social studies teacher. I explained my research to the teacher and she eventually agreed to be interviewed after school hours on a weekday two weeks later, and to be observed on yet another day. Two days after my interview with her, she withdrew from the study because she felt the administration would not allow her to spend any more time away from class. When I explained she would not have to leave class because I would be watching her teach in class, she expressed considerable anxiety about not being able to teach a lesson that promoted critical thinking. She promised to get back to me but she never did.

The teacher-participants of my study were all female Grade 6 social studies teachers in the public schools. The length of individual in-service teaching experience ranged from 2 to 37 years. The school administrators did a wonderful job of introducing and explaining my study to their teachers, such that each participant was cooperative, obliging, and even served me snacks.

## *Data Collection*

### *Interviews*

The interview was chosen as a means of collecting data because it is easy to employ; it is one of the most common and preferred methods of data collection because it provides data more efficiently than other methods. Patton (1990) rationalizes the use of interview in this way:

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts and intentions. We cannot observe behaviours that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world . . . we have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interview, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (p. 196)

Burgess (1984) suggests some guidelines to conduct a successful interview:

> First, it is essential to listen carefully in order to participate in the conversation, to pose particular questions on topics that have not been

> covered or need developing. Secondly, it is important not to interrupt the person or persons who are being interviewed. . . . Thirdly, interviewers need to monitor their own comments, gestures and actions as they may advance or impede the interview. (p. 111)

In this study I used an open-ended, unstructured interview with each of the participants. In an unstructured interview, open-ended questions are asked, allowing the participant to create his/her own response options. Open-ended questions are asked in qualitative research "so that participants can voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researcher or past research findings" (Creswell, 2002, p. 204).

I engaged the participants in open-ended, unstructured interviews without using a set of predetermined questions. The questions I formulated were only used as a guide. (Appendix F lists some of these guide questions.) In the open-ended, unstructured interview, "specific topics were pursued as they arose naturally" (Tisdell in Merriam, 2002 p. 62). The interviews lasted from one and a half to four hours. The informal nature of our dialogue allowed me to discuss tangents and to probe beyond the main questions to elicit authentic responses and gather clarifying information. Each interview was audio taped.

To make the interview a non-threatening process, the participants spoke intermittently in either Pilipino (the national language), English (the second official language in the Philippines), or in Waray-waray, a language spoken in Samar and Leyte provinces and the participants' native language, as well as my own. As each participant developed a sense of comfort with the process, her responses became more elaborate and involved. The depth of the information that each participant provided varied according to her interest in, and the involvement the individual had had, with specific points.

Participants were given the opportunity to listen to the audiotapes of the interviews so that they could modify, elaborate, or delete any of their statements.

### *Observations*

At the completion of each interview, I requested the participant's permission to informally observe a social studies class in which the participant taught critical thinking. Knowing that they were going to get feedback after the lesson, the participants showed no qualms about letting me observe them. During observation, I scanned the classroom, took mental notes about the environment, and I jotted down only a few field notes so as not to appear to be evaluating the teacher's teaching style. While the lesson was in progress, I did not interrupt or ask questions of the participant. After the lesson, each participant was given feedback. As soon as I was out of the classroom, I recorded as many relevant observations as I could recall. The observation was structured around evidence of the teaching of critical thinking.

Classroom observation was necessitated in the study because, "[in] general, the richest vein of information is struck through direct observation of school and classroom life" (Eisner, 1991, p. 182). The classroom observation led to a better understanding of a participant's views on critical thinking because it provided the context in which critical thinking was expected to occur. Observation verified and/or nullified the information given during the interview. It also gave me the opportunity to identify the strategies used to teach the skill and to gauge the extent to which the instructional method promoted critical thinking among students.

Videotaping equipment, which was mounted on a tripod at the back of the room and auto recorded the classroom activities, documented the observation. The equipment was set up before the class started so the process was less intrusive for the teacher and students. The video-tapes were viewed by each participant to provide the teacher-participant an opportunity to review, comment on, clarify points or to delete any part of the recording the instructor wished to address. The videotapes explained, clarified, and provided an illustration of what was observed, and additional field notes were taken from them. Except on one occasion, in one of the rural schools where students were all eager to be video-taped before the class started, the video equipment did not pose any distractions to the participants and to any of the classes.

As drawn from my Filipino cultural experience, I anticipated participants would feel ill at ease about being observed while teaching, and would be reluctant to grant permission for the classroom observation. With the exception of one participant, who eventually withdrew from the study, this did not happen among the five participants whose classes were observed. Each one of them looked confident about their teaching skills and showed enthusiasm while working with the children.

### *Field Notes*

Field notes were an important source of data because they supplemented and complemented the other methods I used in data gathering. They established the context in which data was collected. They captured the participants' and my own feelings, impressions, and additional remarks, made before and after the interview, and observations. They also enabled me to keep track of the development of the study and provided me with reminders of "things to do."

Descriptive notes were written to record the details of what occurred in the classroom during observation. Notes about actual happenings were taken down so that specific actions could be noted as they occurred; this meant I did not have to rely on a general summary of events produced after the fact. Although video recording was done, word-pictures of setting, actions, people, behaviour, and events were drawn to provide a more personal log. Field notes also included summaries of interviews and descriptions that were considered unique to the situation or environment.

Reflective notes included my personal account of how the inquiry progressed, and they contained such elements as problems, apparent prejudices, ideas, hunches, and feelings. The notes also acknowledged mistakes made and suggestions about how to correct them, learning that took place, and themes and patterns presented. My field notes also integrated information about who was involved (pseudonyms), and when and where the observation took place. Notes were recorded as soon as possible after the observation (specifically, on the same day the observation was made) to minimize problems of memory recall. It was easier to write the notes in several paragraphs and to code whenever possible in the margins of the paragraphs. Taking field notes allowed me to relive what was observed and consequently improved my recollection. They provided me with the opportunity to commit to memory and internalize the responses and ideas presented by participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

### *Review of Artefacts*

The 2002 edition of the Philippine social studies curricular document was examined in depth to determine whether or not the teaching of critical thinking was emphasized. Other social studies resource materials, issued free and prescribed by the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports, such as the Grade 6 social studies textbook with its corresponding teacher's manuals, were also analyzed to find evidence of the promotion of, or resistance to, the teaching of critical thinking. Teachers' lesson plans were also examined. The review of the social studies documents provided background information for the research, while the lesson plans supported and further illuminated a given participant's conception of critical thinking.

### *My Input*

My personal input, which drew on my experiences as a former Filipino citizen and a former teacher in the Philippines, was an additional source of data. As a former resident of Basey and Tacloban City, and as one who now lives in Canada, I continued to value my roots in, and ties to, the islands of Samar and

Leyte— connections that informed my selection of these sites as the base for my investigation.

*Data Analysis*

The interpretation of participants' stories was my attempt to understand the meaning of each teacher's account in her own context. Although influenced by the experiences I brought to the process, I tried to interpret the perspective of another in its entirety by relating parts of the data to the whole and vice-versa, thus shaping a cohesive piece of work. Ellis (1998b, p. 17) elucidates the process in this way: "The interpreter works holistically, rather than (for example) using classification systems, in an effort to discern the intent or meaning behind another's expression." It was not my intent, however, to present fixed meanings, as Richardson (2002) explains:

> Hermeneutics is not to be equated with the search for absolute meaning or even with the reinvention of some more human and humane metanarrative. Rather, it is a difficult and tentative exploration in which the role of interpretation, in David Smith's terms, is "to show what is at work in different disciplines and, in the service of human generativity and good faith, is [to be] engaged in the mediation of meaning." (p. 21)

The interpretations I offered represented my understanding of how each teacher-participant made sense of her realities and experiences of teaching critical thinking, which were uniquely shaped by her situation, culture, and position in the community.

I analyzed the collected data by using a qualitative methodology. I personally transcribed the interviews with the participants, which were conducted in English, Waray-waray, or Pilipino, depending on each participant's comfort level. Transcripts of non-English dialogue were translated by me. I verified the interview transcripts by reading the transcriptions while listening to the recorded interviews. I repeatedly reviewed the interview transcripts, observation notes, field notes, and the teacher's lesson plan of each participant until I became familiar with her ideas. The information I gathered from the participants was woven together and rendered into narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Each narrative is presented in the following chapter, "The Participants' Stories."

The first efforts I made to analyze the narratives entailed reading each participant's account several times. This allowed me to formulate several general categories into which data were then placed; Ellis (1998b) considers this the "first loop." A clearer understanding of the data, which was achieved by entering into the second and subsequent loops in a spiral motion, resulted in the emergence of commonalities in and more detailed assessments of participants' perspectives on critical thinking. Each loop created new and different questions in my mind, causing me to alternate between analysis of the narratives, on the one hand, and data, on the other, to identify supporting evidence or answer a query. As I read through the data, certain words, phrases, and patterns surfaced that enabled me to eventually group similar data together. These words and phrases became coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Creswell, 2002;

Patton, 1990). Themes were identified with interrelated data. Polkinghorne describes this process as follows: "The paradigmatic analysis of narratives seeks to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data" (1995, p. 13). My interpretation of, and the nuances I detected in, each participant narrative shifted and changed each time the story was read. However, Packer and Addison (1989), cited by Ellis (1998a), warn that "[A participant's narrative] is neither a guess nor a speculation. It is instead, the working out of possibilities that have become apparent in a preliminary, dim understanding of events" (p. 29). As themes were identified, dialogue that supported the themes was noted. I had to make careful judgments when considering which data was significant and meaningful. Linking key ideas in the narratives to relevant literature facilitated the productive interpretation of accounts. In keeping with the interpretive paradigm, the validity of data was not the principal concern; rather, the primary objective was to determine whether or not my study had been advanced.

The analysis of data was influenced by my experiences and situation, which, as Rossman and Rallis (1998) observe, is a legitimate aspect of a qualitative inquiry:

> The qualitative researcher assumes that understanding and representing what has been learned are filtered through her/his own personal biography that is situated in a specific socio-political, historical moment. Through this lens the researcher tries to make sense of what she/he has learned[;] the researcher interprets the world that she/he has entered.

(p. 10)

Initially, I interpreted data in keeping with the processes proposed by Ellis (1998a, pp. 27–32). Creswell's (2002), and Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) data analysis techniques, which facilitated the search for themes and common threads, and coding, were then applied. Patton's (1990) recommendations regarding data processing were also considered in the treatment of data. Clandinin's and Connelly's (1994) work on narrative inquiry was an invaluable resource for helping me create a narrative structure for the data.

### *Summary*

My study was an interpretive inquiry, which is a type of qualitative research. Data collection involved dialogues with teacher-participants, classroom observations, taking field notes and examination of artefacts. My personal input was also used as a source of data. The data were rendered into narratives, which were looked at holistically, and were analyzed in the context of those being studied. As an interpretive inquiry, the study focused on how people made sense of their situations and their realities. Interpretation of data was negotiated between the researcher's perspective and that of each of the participants, thus moving in an ongoing circular process.

# Chapter 4

## *Review of Artefacts*

### *Review of the Philippine Social Studies Curriculum 2002*

Social studies, in many classrooms, is not considered to be as important as other subject areas, such as language arts and math. It is sometimes considered an "add-on" curriculum item. However, social studies can be an exciting part of school life because it gives students an opportunity to learn about themselves, their heritage, their future, and their government. It stimulates learners' curiosity and sharpens their perceptions as they participate in lively discussions and debate issues that are relevant to them. It enables students to learn about the world and its peoples, which, when taught well, can be remarkably enriching. It also facilitates the development of the skills and values necessary to students who will become effective citizens locally, nationally, and globally.

I believe that the most effective way to develop values and skills is through education, particularly social studies. Accordingly, I looked at the 2002 Philippine social studies curriculum for the elementary grades to identify its objectives, content, and ideological foundations, and thereby determined how critical thinking skills are promoted in the document. Tyler's (cited in Schaffarzick & Hampson, 1975, p. 17) traditional definition of curriculum is used in this paper, which states that the curriculum is a set of "plans for an educational program . . . including the identification and selection of educational objectives, the selection of learning experiences, the organization of learning experiences, and the evaluation of the educational program." Some of my analysis benefited from the teaching experiences I gained when I taught at the elementary level in the Philippines for a number of years.

To provide a more thorough understanding of the analysis I have presented, some contextual information about the Philippine educational system is provided here. Section 5, Article XIV, of the country's constitution requires that the country have a democratic form of government that prescribes the nature of the country's educational system. It requires that all schools aim to develop moral character, personal discipline, civic conscience, and vocational efficiency, and that they teach the duties of citizenship (Fresnoza & Casim, 1964). The Philippine educational system is subject to government control and supervision, through the Office of the Secretary of Education, which directly supervises the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. Within the Department are two co-ordinate branches: schools established by the state (Public Schools), and those established by private citizens (Private Schools).

Social studies in the Philippine educational system is supposedly integrated with Home Economics, Arts, Music, and Physical Education. All subject areas are taught together so that each student can demonstrate the following elements:

- Adequate knowledge and awareness of national identity, the environment and the development of livelihood, science and technology;
- Critical and creative thinking towards responsible decision-making on issues encountered;

- Appreciation for art, music, dances and other aspects of culture, as well as pride in being a Filipino citizen and awareness of his/her rights and responsibilities;
- Positive attitude towards work in order to live productively in a peaceful country; and
- Ability to cope with rapid global change. (Department of Education, 2002, p. 2)

Social studies in the Philippines, it seems, is integrated with social sciences and humanities to provide students with the opportunity to practice citizenship skills relevant to critical social issues. A similar observation is shared by Barth (1991) of the elementary and junior high school social studies in North America. The practical implications of this approach are offered by Hamston and Murdoch (1996) who assert, "Integrated curriculum draws upon many different information sources to illuminate our understanding of people, places, and events. It also more nearly mimics the way individuals actually reference subject matter and construct knowledge in the world beyond the school walls" (cited in Martorella, 1998, p. 303). The wide-ranging and potentially inclusive nature of social studies lends itself to integration with other subject areas. It can be taught in such a way that it integrates other subjects in order to illuminate them. For example, social studies provides a medium through which students can articulate their thoughts about various subjects; they can be encouraged to express their views about critical issues through art forms, such as selecting music to convey their personal view of the world; analyzing historical artefacts by means of a film or slide presentation; dramatizing a solution to or the resolution of an issue; and other such non-traditional means of representation. The understanding and practice of citizenship can be elaborated by cultivating student awareness of social, economic, and environmental interdependence in the local and global contexts. The Nova Scotia Education and Culture (1999) share the suggestions above: "Many of the ethical issues that confront today's students must be examined from the critical perspective provided through the social studies. An appreciation of the changing nature of our world is implicit in this study" (p.8).

The integrated, interdisciplinary method of organizing and presenting the social studies curriculum encapsulates the potential to promote critical thinking among teachers because to make it work effectively, one must draw together related bodies of knowledge, perspectives, and methods of teaching from relevant disciplines to better understand pivotal ideas and issues, persons and events. However, one must be aware that comparatively insignificant content and skills may be selected as the means to facilitate integration, with the consequence that important knowledge is neglected. The result may be that a mixture of learning is produced that includes representative subject fragments that are not particularly meaningful: a smattering of art, a tidbit of social studies, a little bit of physical education, and so forth. Consequently, no depth in any of the disciplines is necessarily achieved and learning is shallow. The teacher must ensure that what is taught about each subject area contributes significantly to achieving the learning goals.

Confusion can also result among students when interdisciplinary education engages with numerous bodies of knowledge simultaneously across integrated subjects. Parker (2001) addresses this difficulty when he writes, "The loss in analytic clarity and the increased difficulty [of study] would not justify the gains hoped for by integrating social studies [with other disciplines]. Experts in a field . . . do not attempt to tackle a problem by focusing their attention on all its parts at once! That would make it a tangled-knot" (p. 415).

On the surface, the Philippine social studies curriculum is interdisciplinary, as outlined on the second page of the document. However, practice is actually contradictory. Home Economics, Art, Music, and Physical Education are taught separately by four different teachers at different times during the day. It does appear that different subjects are integrated to teach citizenship, an integrationist approach that is possible, but which may be time consuming and energy draining for students and teachers because the individual subjects are taught daily. It is no wonder, then, that in the Philippines, school starts at 7:00 a.m. and ends at 4:30 p.m., with an hour's break for lunch. When social studies is taught at the end of the day, the amount of learning that may occur after such a long day is questionable. In rural areas, some students have to walk a few kilometres to and from school, often in the dark. The combination of these circumstances suggests that the curriculum is neither child-centred nor process-oriented.

As a subject, social studies has its own specific set of goals and objectives, topics, subtopics, and concepts, which are similar to the general objectives identified in the earlier part of this analysis. It is taught daily for 40 minutes as a distinct subject by a teacher who teaches all social studies subjects in Grade 5 or 6 at a particular school. Below are the specific goals of social studies, according to the 2002 Philippines social studies curriculum:

> Students will demonstrate:
>
> Love of country and pride in being a Filipino, who has rights and responsibilities; positive attitude and values that help cope with the changing times; ability to care for the environment; critical and analytical thinking and a global vision that allows one to cope with global changes. (p. 4)

In keeping with one of the aims of the Philippine educational system, social studies seeks to help learners develop values, skills, attitudes, and knowledge that will help them become competent local, national, and global citizens. The social and economic dynamics of the country, and the globe, greatly influence the learning objectives of the curriculum to socialize students for global citizenship. The curriculum's emphasis on citizenship is such that the equivalent of the term social studies in the Philippine national language is *Makabayan*, which, when translated literally, means one who loves his/her country.

Citizenship education in Philippine social studies focuses curricular ideology on personal development. This is supported by the goals identified above and efforts made to integrate social studies with Arts, Music, Physical Education, and Home Economics. It is assumed that individuals who are physically, socially, academically, and personally developed will form an "upright" society. It is believed that the humanities subjects, although taught separately from social studies, address the social meaning and the social interpretation of the arts to explain the essentials of life, which, in turn, may help develop productive citizens. This is a progressivist point of view, the main tenet of which is that education should help students acquire skills that will enable them to discover and eventually learn, by themselves, about the changing world around them. A progressive curriculum strives to meet student needs, interests, and concerns. (www.msubillings.edu/shobbs/educational_Philosophy.htm)

The Philippine social studies topics are organized within five different categories: Culture, for Grade1 and Grade 2; Livelihood, for Grade 3; Geography, for Grade 4; History, for Grade 5; and Civics, for Grade 6. Within each focused category are strands: in Grades 1, 2, and 3 Civics and Culture are emphasized. History/Geography and Civics are the strands of the Grade 4 curriculum, which aims to develop the child's awareness of his or her physical, social, and vocational skills, as well as the geographical characteristics of the country: land and water forms, animals, and population. The Grade 5 curriculum's strand is History, which outlines the problems and events that influence the current societal changes and the government's efforts to achieve a better future. The Grade 6 curriculum strand is Civic Education, which emphasizes citizenship. (See Appendix I) The aesthetic effort to make content relevant to students links the curriculum to the personal lives of the learners. The organization of topics is consistent with a progressive philosophy that centres the curriculum on the students' experiences and abilities.

It is significant that while the Philippine social studies curriculum seeks to prepare Filipino youth for responsible citizenship through personal growth, it neglects to develop critical thinking. An examination of the social studies curriculum lists knowledge, values, and skills to be developed through the curriculum, but provides little or no opportunities to develop critical thinking. The curriculum document is a 16-page compilation of topics and subtopics to be addressed in each grade at specific reporting periods. Under each topic are specific concepts to be taught, most of which are articulated in such a way that they require only low-level thinking. Teachers are allowed no flexibility to select which topics/subtopics they want to cover at a given time of the year. The topics must be taught sequentially, as they appear in the curriculum. The topics are too numerous for a class at any given grade level to cover, which creates considerable pressure for teachers and students. For example, a Grade 1 teacher must teach 32 different concepts under four different topics in a school year. The Grade 5s must cover a minimum of 10 different subtopics under each of the four major topics, while the Grade 6s address five major topics, each with about 10 subtopics. Under each topic and subtopic, the teacher must develop 10 skills on average. There would hardly be sufficient time to plan and deliver a critically assessed and creative lesson. The consequence of this requirement to transmit an overwhelming amount of disparate knowledge necessitates an approach of rote memorization in place of critical thinking. Learning could inevitably become superficial and ineffective.

While a progressive school encourages students to interact with one another to learn co-operation and respect for others' views, students in the Philippine schools rarely work in groups and, when they do, each student is assigned an individual task that he or she hands in to a leader for collation. Critical thinking may occur when students work together collaboratively; however, because no sharing of ideas occurs in this form of "group effort," only the leader may have an opportunity to practice critical thinking and to develop related skills.

It is the responsibility of the Department of Education to prepare and mandate school curricula for both private and public schools. In a long distance telephone conversation on April 12, 2006 with Ms. Rogelia K. Firmo, the Department Head of Elementary Education for Region 8, in the Department of Education Culture and Sports, Philippines, I learned that a standardized national curriculum is handed down by the Department of Education, which ensures classroom priorities are congruent with those of the state. This practice reveals that the government selects and organizes the objectives and contents of the curriculum. Although teacher-input is solicited through the responses to questionnaires sent to some teachers, the supervisor is unsure as to how much of the teacher-concerns are considered.

The most recent social studies curriculum in the Philippines is a booklet that outlines the scope and sequence of concepts that are to be taught in each elementary grade, including a list of instructional goals and topics to be covered. It provides neither the vision nor the rationale for teaching the subjects, nor does it suggest any instructional strategies, resources, or activities. This could conceivably indicate recognition and validation of teachers' resourcefulness and abilities. The implication is that the implementation of the mandated curriculum is the teachers' role and prerogative in social studies education. Dewey's progressive philosophy supports this approach; he writes,

> [Teachers] should be given to understand that they not only are permitted to act on their own initiative, but that they are expected to do so and that their ability to take hold of a situation for themselves would be a more important factor in judging them than their following any particular set of methods or scheme. (1904, pp. 27–28, cited by Ross, 1997)

Teachers are expected to deliver the curriculum through their choice of strategies, with teacher-made materials and others they can avail themselves of, because the Department rarely complements the curriculum with resources. Granting teachers the freedom to use their own teaching methodology is a liberal persuasion that alludes to the intellectual respect and autonomy given to the teacher. This is "one of the key concepts of liberalism [, upholding] the dignity of the individual and the right to individual liberty" (www.wordiq.com/definiton/Liberalism). Until recently, when textbooks were made available to schools, the ratio was commonly one textbook for every five students or more. This method of handling the technical aspect of the curriculum leaves much to be desired. It seems, here, that curriculum and classroom instruction are considered separate entities. Easy access to knowledge by students and teachers should be facilitated and straightforward.

The social studies standardized curriculum lends itself to presentation as subject-centred or content-oriented material. The curriculum in this analysis is concerned primarily with the transmission of knowledge. The fields of study at the elementary level require that students have a good command of factual knowledge, which in Philippine classrooms is often accomplished through teachers' lectures; the copying of notes from hand-outs, the board, or from textbooks; and the completion of questions at the end of a given unit or the filling out of worksheets. The acquisition of knowledge and content is socially and culturally important to a certain extent because content is the basis for discussion. However, this acquisition can be achieved by means of problematizing topics and concepts so that the practice of critical thinking is introduced and developed.

While knowledge of certain facts is expected of every citizen—such as general information about history, geography, and government—acquisition of this information can be made active. The chronological history of the country can be made to come alive and made relevant by connecting past events to current societal behaviours. Examining how the present is influenced by the past can thus be made meaningful to Filipino students. For example, the country was colonized for more than four centuries, yet the topic of colonization is hardly mentioned in the curriculum. One could argue that historical events and dates do not change, and therefore a passive imparting of historical knowledge cannot be avoided. However, the problems engendered by colonization represent a crucial set of issues that the Philippine social studies curriculum should address in light of the prevailing Filipino "colonial mentality" and the fatalistic attitude that prevails, both of which are consequence of centuries of colonization. The oppression to which Filipinos were subjugated has been internalized, and the people are actively discouraged from questioning authority. This may explain why the social studies curriculum is centred more on content than on issues.

Currently, the country continues to be colonized by multi-national corporations through the process of globalization. In fact, the Philippines has been subjected to the IMF and the World Bank's Structural Adjustment Program for more than three decades, now. It is not surprising that the new Philippine social studies curriculum for elementary grades, which was mandated and taught for the first time during the 2002–2003 school year, excluded the subject of globalization. For a country that is as thoroughly affected by globalization as the Philippines, and whose social and economic problems stem primarily from globalization, it is disappointing that the topic is excluded. However, the subject is superficially addressed in the first level of secondary education, though this is not to say that elementary-grade children are incapable of understanding the concept. The inclusion of the concept of globalization as early as the primary years might prove an effective tool for developing responsible and critical citizens.

The ideological foundation of the Philippine social studies curriculum shifts between the progressive and the liberal perspective. Although its ultimate objective—to develop good citizens—is a progressive objective, the curriculum's content- and outcomes-based instructions, delivered by means determined by the individual teacher's discretion and practices, emphasize a liberal frame of mind. This typifies Dewey's metaphor of the pendulum: teaching swings back and forth between two extremes—fostering individual growth on one end, and imposing controls on the other end.

I hope that various education stakeholders will be represented in the process of formulating the curriculum to exert greater investment and ownership. Other approaches, such as an issues-based approach and a constructivist approach, can be tested as appropriate means to teach social studies in the Philippines. Because colonization and globalization have significantly affected the country and its people, I also suggest that these topics be included in the curriculum (Basiga, 2004).

### *Review of the Grade 6 Philippine Social Studies Textbook*

Textbooks and other materials are necessary for the delivery of the curriculum. They are often program materials that contain primary documents, narrative histories, artwork, skills lessons, guide and review questions, exercises, and additional suggested resources and activities. They provide an invaluable store of information that teachers would otherwise have to gather on their own. Parker (2001) underscores the importance of these resources:

> Considering all that teachers must do in a day (from teaching reading and math to teaching social studies and science; from mending hurt feelings to phoning parents), we believe the social studies textbook program is an indispensable aid to teaching and learning. Without it, social studies tends to be slighted. A busy teacher cannot easily assemble a rich stew of primary documents, explanations, examples, charts and maps, narratives, artwork, and the lesson plans for using these things. The wisdom that history affords, the intelligence that geography affords, and the democratic values that civics afford—all are put at risk. (p. 287)

After examining the 2002 Philippine social studies curriculum, I looked at the textbook issued by the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports for use in Grade 6 to determine how it fosters critical thinking. The Grade 6 resource, entitled *Ang Bayan Kong Mahal*, (*My Beloved Country*), (Andal, 1999), written in Pilipino, is the only material made available by the government to the instructors for their use in the teaching of civic education, which is the curricular mandate for that grade level. The contents of the book are organized into five units: Philippine Identity; The Philippine Landscape; The Government and Its Citizens; The Philippines as a Democratic Country; Becoming a Progressive Country. These are the same five required topics outlined in the curriculum. Each unit presents four different sub-topics, and each sub-topic tries to develop an average of seven different concepts.

The material is user-friendly in the sense that the language and the readability level employed are within the children's level of comprehension. The information is presented in segments that make it is easy to understand and in which to locate specific information. Review questions are found at the end of each unit, followed by a unit test. However, the contents of the book comprise mostly of narratives and facts—content that, when unmediated by a teacher's pragmatic interpretation and presentation encourages only rote memorization. The textbook does not do much to help students learn skills other than recalling facts. It does not indicate what, how, or when skills should be learned. The questions and activities provided require only the regurgitation of facts, and none specifically promote critical thinking. No critical issues are raised, which renders reading a dull and a sterile activity. The unit tests also lead to and reward memorization of facts. For example, consider the following test items:

A. Choose the best answer.

1. Which of the following does not describe the various ethnic groups in the country:
    a. reside in different regions of the country
    b. have their own music, religion and ways of doing things
    c. originated from one race
    d. speak a common language
2. Which of the following form the cultural minorities:
    a. those that comprise the majority of the ethnic groups

b. the ethnic group which is composed of only a few members

c. the ethnic group that shows primitive ways

d. those that have their own traditions

B. Describe how the following groups immigrated to the Philippines:

1. The Pygmies
2. The Indonese
3. The Malays

These questions are patterned after the information found on and between pages 32 and 35 of the Grade 6 textbook. Unit test items at the end of each unit are similar in nature.

The visual sources may benefit from enrichment with the inclusion of primary documents that would encourage students to interpret, analyze, and draw conclusions from original sources. Pictures and paintings can be examined with a critical perspective. These can serve as sources of interpretable messages and symbols, promoting critical thinking in students (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), 1992; Nova Scotia Education and Culture, 1999).

Numerous illustrations included in the social studies textbook help explain concepts and allow students to study the history, values, and beliefs of Philippine society within specific time frames. The graphics are closely related to the substance of the materials. Cartoons can lead to debate and the critical discussion of issues, but they fail to do so in the way they are presented in the textbook because they simply reiterate the facts in the book. An example of this point is depicted in the picture on page four of the student-textbook, *Ang Bayan Kong Mahal*. The translated description of the picture explains how people show self-discipline by waiting for their turn to cross the road at a busy city intersection, in an organized manner: everybody walks orderly within the pedestrian lane.

The textbook lacks suggestions about strategies and activities appropriate for teaching the curriculum. This element can help teachers consider implementing the curriculum using innovative methods of teaching, such as the use of critical thinking activities, collaborative learning, creative activities, debates, and other non-traditional avenues.

The information is written from a single perspective, and students are given no opportunity to make choices about which point of view to consider. Only one interpretation of an idea is presented, and no distinction is made between fact and opinion. Consider the following translated text taken from the textbook, *My Beloved Country:*

> We, Filipinos value education so much. It is every parent's aspiration to see their children graduate from a college or university such that parents would do every thing to put them through. The majority of Filipinos look down upon labour and skilled workers—a negative attitude we acquired from the Spaniards.
>
> Although, a college or university degree is an asset, getting one should not be the measure of success. Earning a living that can adequately support oneself and his/her family is more important. (p. 65)

The above declaration is an assortment of facts and opinions that are not distinguished from each other. Readers are not given the chance to create their own opinions on the matter. Significantly, no citations refer to original or secondary sources from which narratives, or facts about events and people are taken. There is also no mention made of additional resources that students and teachers can avail themselves of for further details about and explanation of a topic or concept.

The materials are well organized, in that they contain clear headings and directions, and topics are sequentially presented as they appear in the curriculum document. The book, however, manifests little variety in the kinds of questions raised or the activities they suggest, if they suggest any. Further, the textbook makes no accommodation for different learning styles or disparate learning abilities.

The textbook issued by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports of the Philippines to implement the social studies curriculum in Grade 6 is an important resource for information that can provide the basis for the acquisition of knowledge, and the development of values, attitudes, and skills. However, the text leaves much to be desired in terms of providing an instructional or ideological framework within which to develop skills that will enable learners to become responsible citizens. The text does not cultivate or promote elements of critical thinking, research, debate, attaching valuing, interpretation, analysis, evaluation, or other higher-order thinking skills. While the topics identified are consistent with the curriculum, they are ultimately presented in uninteresting ways. The text fails to provide any variety of activities or questions. Information is presented from a single perspective, and the credibility of the information is questionable because no sources are cited. The visuals support the content of the curriculum, but they do not stimulate discussion or opportunities for alternative and questioning interpretations. For busy teachers who do not have time to independently research the information necessary to teach the curriculum, the accessibility of information afforded by the textbook is certainly valuable.

### *Review of the Grade 6 Social Studies Teacher's Manual*

While textbooks provide a body of organized knowledge that is used as the framework for understanding a specific subject, teachers make sense of such knowledge by transforming it into lessons and learning units. Because teachers affect the implementation of the curriculum, they must have proper training and should be provided with support that enables them to create meaningful learning experiences (Parker 1987; Ross 1997). Ross (1997) cites Shaver, Davis, and Helburn (1980), who assert that the key to successful social studies curriculum delivery is the teacher:

> [A] teacher's belief about schooling, his or her knowledge of the subject area and of available materials and techniques, how he or she decides to put these together for the classroom—out of that process of reflection and personal inclination comes the day-by-day classroom experiences of students. (p. 16)

The Grade 6 social studies textbook, *My Beloved Country*, is accompanied by a teacher's edition with the same title. The five topics in the teacher's manual match the scope and sequence of the five main topics presented in the student's textbook, which constitute the curricular topics to be covered in the 6th grade. However, the skills and concepts to be developed in both editions are not always similar. For example, in Unit 1, "Philippine Identity," the student text lists several skills to be developed under the first subtopic, including the following:

- Identify the characteristics of a population that will help make a country become progressive.
- Explain the importance of a healthy and intelligent populace for the nation's prosperity.

Neither of these objectives, however, is found in the teacher's edition. The same disparity holds true in other units. Contrary to my expectation, the teacher's edition contains less information than does the student text. The facts found in the student version are not supplied in the teacher's version; to have access to this information, a teacher must have a copy of the student's edition. In the Philippine setting, this is an inconvenient necessity because often the number of books issued is limited to the number of students in the class, and in some cases there are not enough copies for all the students. Moreover, no additional material that provides teachers with background information and useful clarification about the topics they must teach is made easily accessible to them. This dearth of background information hampers the teachers' effective implementation of the curriculum, as Stanley (1991) claims:

> A teacher's knowledge of subject matter influences how he or she modifies the materials used . . . to teach the concepts and other forms of knowledge. . . . The more knowledgeable teachers not only [know] more subject matter, but also [know] more about the relationship among the parts of this knowledge; how this discipline or field [relates] to other areas of knowledge; and equally important, how best to represent this knowledge so students [will] come to understand it. (p. 250)

Without access to basic background information about the topics they must teach, the effectiveness of Filipino teachers will be limited, especially in promoting critical thinking.

One thing the Grade 6 teacher's manual does do is list lesson objectives and provide a collection of focus and follow-up questions that aim to advance discussion. However, the questions advanced for discussion require lower-level thinking for the most part. The following examples are noted on page 82 of the teacher's edition: "What is the composition of the national government? What is the composition of the local government? What are their functions?"

Answers for these questions are plainly provided on pages 120–121 of the children's text. Such low-level-thinking questions necessitate only base-level answers that rob students of the opportunity to think critically unless prompted in other ways to do so. Another set of examples is found on page 25 of the manual:

> What is the meaning of equality among people?

How does the constitution guarantee equal rights among men and women?

How does this help define Philippine identity?

The questions initially appear to be thought provoking in a way that may encourage discussion. However, upon examination of the contents of the student text (pp. 56–57), I found answers to these questions had also been provided. The text's provision of answers hinders students from exercising their own thinking and assessment processes. Wilen and White (1991, p. 48) observe, "Process product researchers have reported that the frequency of questions asked by teachers is positively related to student learning." Furthermore, asking more in-depth questions also enhances the quality of learning.

I located a number of questions posed in the teacher's edition that might promote critical thinking. Among them were the following:

- Should all Filipino cultural and traditional customs be perpetuated? Why or why not? (p. 25)
- Do the Filipinos enjoy the freedoms provided by a democratic government? (p. 84)
- Are there countries that do not enjoy the same freedoms that we do? Explain your answer. (p. 84)

Although these questions have the potential to stimulate critical thinking by requiring students to make judgments, their opinions are likely to be uninformed speculations, because there is insufficient information in their texts to support views one way or the other. In the first question, children may or may not know what practices constitute Filipino customs and traditions. For the second and third questions, children would need to be familiar with the freedoms enjoyed in a democracy. The third question would also require contextual information about other countries' governmental systems. None of this information is provided in the student text, nor is it in the teacher's edition.

The teacher's manual suggests practical activities that the teacher can employ to achieve lesson objectives. I am compelled to assume that a teacher can select the activities that she/he decides are most relevant to her class, otherwise—if the text's suggestions were followed sequentially, as is the practice in the curriculum guide, directed by the Department of Education—the teacher would require considerable time to teach the concepts in a given unit. Nevertheless, an inexperienced teacher can benefit from the presence of these practical activities. However, most of the activities are repetitive and uninspiring: they ask learners to read certain pages of the book to locate specific information; they recall facts introduced earlier in the text; they respond to pictures and "sayings"; and each unit concludes with a test that requires only rote memorization. Most significantly, no issues that specifically require critical thinking on the part of the students are offered. It must be noted that the materials required by teachers to develop the concepts and skills associated with the suggested activities are not accessible to most teachers. Almost every lesson asks for certain pictures; other requisite materials include a globe, various types of maps, a cassette tape recorder, an overhead projector, and charts. While teachers can ill-afford to buy these materials on their own, the government provides none of them.

By following the sequence of topics indicated in the teacher's edition of the Grade 6 social studies textbook, the teacher is assured of covering the required learning for the Grade 6 curriculum. Although the suggested activities and strategies provided in the manual can guide teachers' implementation of their mandate, especially inexperienced teachers, the activities hardly encourage the development of critical thinking. Most of the questions demand only lower-level thinking. Where opportunities exist for students to practice critical thinking, sufficient information to enable them to generate enlightened views on a given topic is lacking. I suggest that presenting concepts as issues that require critical thinking may persuade students to be involved in a discussion and rouse them to think in more complex ways.

### *Review of the Grade 6 Philippine Social Studies Achievement Tests*

As with other content areas, school children in the Philippines are given an achievement test in social studies at the end of the school year. Traditionally, an achievement test is administered to evaluate the quality of the social studies curriculum gauged by student-responses. It is used to check the correlation between the planned curriculum and the curriculum that is taught. It determines whether the mission and objectives of the curriculum are accomplished, whether the content of the curriculum is covered, and whether instruction is based on the curriculum. The evaluation clarifies the types of resources that are used and the time allotment necessary in classrooms, training, and supervision to successfully implement the curriculum (Jurg, 1992).

In the Philippines, achievement tests are used principally to evaluate teacher-effectiveness, student-knowledge and skills, and the conduciveness of a school's environment to learning. These elements are used to rank a school against other schools in the district. Consequently, there is a great deal of pressure on students, teachers, and schools to do well with the achievement tests. This may cause instructors to "teach to the test."

Grade 1, Grade 4, and Grade 6 students in the Philippines are administered a non-standardized social studies achievement test. The achievement tests are prepared by a committee that comprises Grade 1, 4, and 6 teachers who have been ranked by the district schools as "master teachers." The committee is formed to prepare, administer, and mark the test. Grade 1 master teachers form the committee for Grade 1, Grade 4 master teachers form the committee for Grade 4, and so on.

Assuming that the complexity of the Grade 6 test is greater than that of the exams for the earlier grades and critical thinking questions would be found, I decided to concentrate on the Grade 6 tests only. I examined the 2004–2005 social studies achievement tests for Grade 6, prepared by the rural and urban schools that participated in my study. My objective was to determine if the instruments used to measure student-achievement tested for critical thinking, given that one of the goals articulated for social studies education is the development of critical thinking. The following are examples of test questions administered in the urban area:

- Today, in 2005, the Philippine population has reached approximately:

  A. 65M B. 75M C. 85M D. 100M

- Which of the following is not a Philippine ethnic group:

  A. Cebuano B. Muslim C. Ilokano D. Samar

- Which of the following shows self-reliance:

  A. Dependency on others B. Borrowing or begging for money
  C. Being idle D. Personal development

The following are questions taken from the rural district achievement test:

- What do we call the total number of inhabitants in an area?

  A. Population C. Production
  B. Modulation D. Transportation

- Which institution protects the rights of the citizens?

  A. The church C. The government
  B. The school D. The family

- The country's population who holds a job or provides a service is called:

  A. Human resources C. Assistants
  B. Employees D. Neighbours

Neither the rural nor the urban district achievement tests I examined test for critical thinking. Both achievement tests use multiple-choice questions (although it should be noted that a highly structured multiple-choice question can also assess for critical thinking). I assume that relative ease of administration and marking was the major consideration when selecting the multiple-choice format. The questions are deficient in their exploration and assessment of critical thinking, especially because they require the identification of only one correct answer, and in neither exam does selecting the correct answer reflect a student's ability to think critically. A test structure that necessitates critical thinking often presents a number of choices and, further, requires students to articulate how and why they arrive at an answer (French & Rhoder, 1992). While the Philippine achievement tests score students according to their ability to remember facts, a test that develops critical thinking marks "students according to the cogency of their analyses. If a student provides a brilliant defence for a weak paragraph, he or she can still receive a top grade" (Ennis & Weir, 1985, p.17). In a test that allows students to respond to a social studies concept in the form of a critical essay, students are marked not on how well they write, but on how they respond critically.

Although the district achievement tests for rural and urban community schools in the Philippines measure a broad knowledge of content, as outlined in the 2002 social studies curriculum, they fail to measure critical thinking. They only require the regurgitation of facts, and the multiple-choice format likely promotes guessing. Most questions are patterned after the information provided in the textbook. In light of the fact that schools are ranked according to the students' achievement results, schools' motivation to test only low-level thinking is understandable. Considering, also, that questions that require only one correct answer are easier and faster to mark, it is no surprise that achievement tests tend to cover only content knowledge. This practice frees the testing committee to pursue additional responsibilities, given that they must mark tests after regular school hours.

### *Summary*

The new social studies curriculum claims to develop critical and creative thinking. However, active promotion of these skills is not evident in the document. The large number of topics that must be taught in one school year at each grade level, combined with the disjointed nature of their delivery, is not conducive to the effective transmission of knowledge. Little time is made available to cultivate or practice the skills of critical thinking about, reflection on, or evaluation of substantive concepts in any of the prescribed materials issued by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports. One goal of the purportedly interdisciplinary social studies curriculum, supported by the student's textbook, teacher's manual, and achievement test, is to develop critical and creative thinking skills. However, I conclude that the content, organization, and ideology of all the documents reviewed ultimately neglect to support a classroom structure that can ensure critical thinking does occur and, consequently, fall short of their objective to mould responsible local, national, and global citizens.

# Chapter 5

## *The Participants' Stories*

The stories told in this chapter were generated from the information I gathered from the interviews, the classroom observations, field notes, and the lesson plans of teacher-participants. Weaving all the information gathered from one participant into a cohesive narrative helped me clarify conflicting data, which I did by looking holistically at the interdependence and interrelatedness of the information. The first two stories represented the perspectives of two urban school teachers, while the three stories that followed were those of rural teachers.

### *Mrs. Madrigal's Story*

Despite my best efforts to be inconspicuous, the unusual presence of video camera and a group of Mrs. Madrigal's colleagues watching from the hallway, had Mrs. Madrigal's Grade 6 students buzzing with curiosity. Once settled, Mrs. Madrigal led the students in a Filipino rendition of "It's a Small World." Although singing, the students were not the only ones who looked a little excited—Mrs. Madrigal was also a little nervous. While the students were being watched by the visitors, their teacher was also being observed by others including myself.

Mrs. Madrigal's anxiety was quite understandable. Having only two years of teaching experience, she had only taught social studies for two semesters. Despite the mentorship that was evident in the teaching staff, Mrs. Madrigal still voiced some edginess: "I ask other teachers how to teach something…even the principal, especially that I started teaching later. I was a bit concerned that you were going to watch me teach." Knowing that my intention was not to criticize, but to observe and provide constructive feedback, Mrs. Madrigal had graciously agreed to my observation. Of particular interest were her methods of promoting critical thinking amongst her students.

In fact, critical thinking was at the heart of our discussion. She believed that she promoted critical thinking not only in her social studies class, but also in her home economics class. Although she did not have an exact definition of critical thinking, her intuition told her that she at least touched on such higher-level thought: "Maybe, but in home economics, we teach mostly about household work, how to plant plants, fixing the house, livelihood. Along the way, I may have touched on critical thinking without knowing it."

As the class continued, Mrs. Madrigal moved to the current events section of her social studies class. She creatively sparked the students' thoughts:

> For tomorrow they had been given an assignment today. Ok, let's listen again; let's watch television again because our lesson … is about government. Who will be willing to share a current event in front of the class about what is happening? We have current events everyday.

The students were a little timid. No one raised his/her hand. But, Mrs. Madrigal continued on. Her current events report consisted of news regarding a rally against President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's alleged acts of illegal electioneering.

Once her lecture ended again, she tried to spark a class-discussion. She asked the students whether or not they agreed to impeach the President. With a resounding condemnation of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's potential impeachment, the students responded to her question. She then asked the children to give their reasons for not impeaching the President. Some students stated that the integrity of the vice-president, who would replace Mrs. Arroyo if she were impeached, was also questionable. Others retorted that more unrest would occur after the impeachment, or that President Macapagal-Arroyo was already fulfilling her duties. Mrs. Madrigal remained satisfied that "because when we share news, they are able to answer questions," her students were engaging in critical thinking.

As the class continued, Mrs. Madrigal moved to a much more interactive exercise. She had the children remove strips of manila paper taped on to one of the blackboards with written information on them. On the adjacent board a T chart was drawn, outlining the "Features of a Democratic Country" and "Features of a Non-democratic Country." One by one, the strips of manila paper were taped under the appropriate heading on the T chart as the class read the chart in unison. Once the chart was completed Mrs. Madrigal began the interaction with the students: "Are the features of a democratic country actually being practiced in the Philippines?" In unison, the students responded with a "Yes."

A single voice of dissent was heard amongst the students. Mrs. Madrigal stomped her foot and demanded that the student repeat his answer. Sheepishly, the child edited his previous statement, answered in the affirmative, and grinned at his mentor. Mrs. Madrigal smiled at him, at the camera and moved on.

Her next exercise was introduced when she further elaborated on her notion of critical thinking: "reacting to pictures, expressing their views about the picture or the activity that they had." Mrs. Madrigal asked the students to identify the government service being communicated via five pictures. The first picture depicted a group of farmers tilling the land; the second illustrated Athena holding the balance of justice; the third displayed an assembly of people from different countries; the fourth showed armed soldiers; the fifth was a picture of idle street children.

Once the instructions were given, the students instantaneously broke into five separate groups where each group received one of the five pictures. There was no bickering amongst the students, only efficiency. Within minutes, a group leader/reporter was chosen. Each group was asked to respond and report the answer to the following questions written on the back of each picture: "What government function is being represented in the picture? In your opinion, is that government function important? Why?"

The children in each group turned their desks to face each other, I presumed to work collaboratively. According to Mrs. Madrigal, group work is the best way to develop critical thinking. She stated, "They are in groups. If you're really asking for critical thinking, I put them in groups. They are in groups. Then I give them activities. Every group has its own activities, and as a result the expectation is met." She elaborated why collaborative work promoted critical thinking, stating that she believed that "[b]ecause they are having their own ideas to share with the group. They share their ideas."

The picture that each group received was passed around for each member to see and to read the questions. Each member was to independently think of his/her own answers to the questions and write them on a piece of paper. The answers were handed to the leader who decided which answers were to be included in the group report. Once the leader's decision was made, he/she wrote the answer on a manila paper and read it to the class.

The students followed all of these instructions skillfully. In fact, considering that no materials or references were given to the class to help with the task, as well as the short time frame given to the class to complete the assignment, I was impressed by each report. Each leader read a paragraph or so about the picture, which gave the perfect explanation of the importance of the service that the government supposedly offered. For example, Group 5 reported that it was important to take care of the idle street children because, if given a chance, their illegal tendencies would be curbed into allowing them to become productive members of society. Group 1 reported that encouraging farmers to work the land would not only make the farmers become self-reliant, but they would also improve the country's economy.

The groups' reports were clear and concise, but I noted that those students not reporting did not appear to be listening to any of the other reports. Although their conversations were not overly disruptive, some children were quietly visiting with each other; others were drawing, and some were still writing their answers on a piece of paper. I somewhat found a rationalization to their behaviour in Mrs. Madrigal's comments:

> I think it is the way the pupils express themselves when they are doing their activity. For example, my lesson tomorrow . . . I will show [pictures] to them and I will let them examine it and let them tell me what their opinion is about it. What they think about it, what is happening in the picture. That's my understanding. When they are examining something, they are exercising their mind; whatever they can think of, they are able to express it about the picture.

Mrs. Madrigal proceeded to summarize all of the reports. She laid strips of paper on the floor that were cut into the shape of sunrays and upon which were previously-prepared statements written by Mrs. Madrigal before the start of class. Eagerly, student-volunteers picked up the sunrays and taped them on to the side of a circle, representing the sun. I noted that the statements on Mrs. Madrigal's sunrays were exact echoes of the students' reports. I wondered if the students were thinking critically or just recalling previously learned concepts.

Just as the students followed Mrs. Madrigal's instructions, Mrs. Madrigal followed the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) which outlined the concepts to be taught sequentially in class. The lesson objectives were patterned after the BEC document such that Mrs. Madrigal only used critical thinking when it was called for, "Because there are objectives that are asking only to name things, just to list them. Not all of them, but maybe we can actually use them so that the children can really express themselves more extensively about the lesson." Despite the freedom to teach beyond the BEC in order to develop critical thinking, she knew only to do so in order to vary her strategy so it did not get boring for the children. She confided, "If possible I go further, especially when it gets boring using the same method. I vary my teaching strategy." Mrs. Madrigal viewed critical thinking as a strategy synonymous with problem solving:

> Yes, it is a strategy also. It is a strategy because it is similar to discovery method. Yes, it is similar to problem solving because they are given an activity to do, and it's up to them to decide what to do, as long as there are questions to follow and then they will express and they will write things about the questions, focused on many answers, not just one, whatever they understand.

Like the discovery method or inquiry approach where students were given the freedom to seek out answers to the given problem, critical thinking also provided the students with the opportunity to find their own solution to the problem and to express their answers in their own way. This, according to Mrs. Madrigal was the reason why critical thinking was problem solving.

Mrs. Madrigal admitted that she only enjoyed teaching critical thinking to fast learners:

> It depends on the children because there are some who finds it easy to do it compared to those (what do we call them?) fast learners and the slow learners since you really have hard time

with the slow learners than the fast learners.

Although she acknowledged that the slow learners also needed to develop the skill, the time allotted for social studies prevented her from attending to their special needs:

> They also need [critical thinking], but it's easier to deliver lessons [to fast learners] because we also have to follow the time allotment for our teaching. The time allotment for that subject is 40 minutes, so you have to maximize your time. You will end up not finishing your lesson. It will take two or three more periods before you can complete it because they are really slow in coming up with answers. You as a teacher also get frustrated because they don't get what you're trying to impart.

In an effort to get the slow learners involved in the class, Mrs. Madrigal brought the questions and lessons down to their level by giving them easier questions—lower level questions. One of the problems she pointed to was the distinct possibility that there was lack of support at home, which might be a factor in their inability to think critically:

> Sometimes [slow learners] are included, but you just get frustrated because they are not able to come up to your expectation. But when you go down to their level, they can get it, although not the same as the bright children because sometimes our children are not supported at home, especially that the children in our area belong to squatter families.

Although the urban school was located in a low-economic area of the city, she later realized that application of critical thinking to practical situations at home could occur. This became apparent during the class discussion of the news that they saw on TV at home, which she shared with me:

> For example today, they were saying, "Ma'am, President Arroyo says that she has now resolved her problem. She won in the impeachment process." "What is going to happen to the president?" I ask. They reply, "Maybe she can now sleep soundly." Others say, "No, because her conscience will bother her according to my father." Others say, "Why doesn't the president just step down since she has not helped the country, anyway?" our neighbour said. Then I said, "Is that true that she hasn't done anything? What have you seen?" Someone answered, "Yes, she had some roads repaired." Conversation like that goes a long way if it has something to do with the news.

Mrs. Madrigal agreed that one of the reasons why slow learners had difficulty thinking critically was due to lack of exposure. Teachers avoided teaching it to slow learners "because the child really has to think to express [himself/herself]. Then it has to be put into writing, if they have the ability. It's different from fast learners because they are smart."

Mrs. Madrigal claimed that the textbooks issued by the Department of Education provided useful, but limited information about a topic. Mrs. Madrigal often had to refer to other books, which she borrowed from private schools, to prepare for her lessons. She also photocopied information from other materials for her students. Despite all of this, Mrs. Madrigal still affirmed that the textbooks provided by the government did promote critical thinking in the sense that they gave children ideas.

Aside from the problems that she encountered in teaching critical thinking such as the difficulty in involving slow learners, time constraints, lack of support at home, lack of materials, and where the curriculum objectives did not lend themselves to critical thinking, Mrs. Madrigal was encouraged to teach critical thinking. In her words she expressed:

> It is important so that [students] can exercise, practise, not just their ability to respond, but also to deepen their thoughts. They would have better understanding; they would extend their ability to understand – that's what critical thinking can give the children. . . . and not to be content with just simple responses, but a much extensive response, and be able to come up with other possibilities. It encourages me when I hear them express themselves. I'm happy to realize that they have a number of responses to a certain question, and they can come up with various activities.

Upon observing and discussing critical thinking with Mrs. Madrigal, it was clear that her understanding of critical thinking was the ability to express one's opinion or share ideas. As a corollary to this, the ability to independently think of numerous answers to a question was also believed to be critical thinking. She described her effort in prodding her students:

> I will continue to ask for more responses, "What else? Give me more answers. What else can you say about this?" Maybe that's one way of developing critical thinking. They will continue to think of other answers when they realize that their answers are insufficient. Maybe this is critical thinking, too. Give follow up questions.

Mrs. Madrigal also believed that the ability to locate specific answers to questions was another aspect of critical thinking. She believed that since the textbooks issued by the government disseminated specific information about a particular topic, they were helpful in developing critical thinking. Although the students were able to get ideas from the textbooks, the references only provided limited information about the lessons.

She remained strong in her belief that the best way to teach critical thinking was through collaborative effort. According to her, group work allowed the students to come up with their own ideas and share them with the group. However, it appeared that Mrs. Madrigal somewhat confused critical thinking for problem solving which she observed were both teaching strategies. She stated that although critical thinking could be promoted in other subject areas, she used it more often in social studies, particularly to achieve an objective mandated in the curriculum guide:

I was as grateful to Mrs. Madrigal as she was of me for participating in my study:

> That's a big help for me, too. I've been teaching social studies this year and last year, and I might be teaching it for a while. So I'll have an idea. You can give me more ideas. Myself, sometimes I find it difficult to teach something.

Being a relatively young teacher, hopefully Mrs. Madrigal would have many years to learn and practice various strategies in her teaching, particularly in teaching her students to think critically.

### *Mrs. Cortes's Story*

My quiet arrival to Mrs. Cortes's classroom was matched by the diligence of the thirty or more students, silently reading their textbooks. Counter-pointed by the noise of the children playing in the courtyard on the main floor two stories down, the students' focus was not disturbed by my setting-up of my video camera or the student teachers also coming to observe Mrs. Cortes's class. Located in affluence, the manor-style school building was set off from the local traffic. The school's prosperity was embodied in the classroom itself. Although crammed with students, adjacent to the teacher's desk was a plethora of learning materials: games, science equipment, reference materials, books, magazines. Unlike any of the other classrooms I visited, these treasures were readily accessible to the students.

The presence of the materials supported Mrs. Cortes's dialogue when she proudly asserted, "I teach critical thinking in various ways such as in games, activity cards, questions, especially math questions." Before the lesson began, I casually tried to strike-up a conversation with some of the children. Although shy, one of the students informed me that they were reviewing yesterday's assignment. Still intrigued by the learning materials, I asked the students about the frequency of their use. I was informed that the class hardly ever used them.

Mrs. Cortes arrived with an armful of instructional materials, laying them on the table at the front, and then taping other items to the blackboard—all of which she planned to use during the lesson. The students simultaneously stood and greeted Mrs. Cortes, myself, and the student teachers. And so the lesson began.

Current events were to be the initial topic, and Mrs. Cortes asked for a volunteer to read a piece of news to the class. Mrs. Cortes believed that through current events, she was effectively able to develop critical thinking. She claimed:

> In fact, when I read the letter, which you sent to the, our superintendent, when it comes to critical thinking, I think that comes in because my social studies is a 40-minute period. My five minutes there is spent on current events because I allow, I let my children buy the newspaper everyday. So a newsboy sends or comes here to give us a copy. And then I will assign somebody to make the report on any news article about the day. So with the recent happening in Manila, we have the impeachment process, so the children were exposed to the, because you cannot help but talk about it with the students because they would hear it from the radio, from TV. I think that's critical thinking because I let them understand about the situation.

A volunteer walked to the front of the class and proceeded to read of the death of a former election commissioner who lost her battle with ovarian cancer in a Chicago hospital. The volunteer then asked the class to recall factual information about the report he had just finished reading. Some were able to recall the facts verbatim. However, for those whose rote memory was not as accurate, the volunteer simply moved onto another student.

No discussion followed the report. The students were made privy to Mrs. Cortes's summary and her comments about appreciating the deceased election commissioner's efforts in dealing with the past controversy over notorious former President Marcos's embezzlement scandal. As quickly as her summary was, so was her transition to the next lesson.

For the next activity, Mrs. Cortes asked the children to name the *barangay* (community) where they lived. Mrs. Cortes clearly stated what her objective was with her lesson. She was hoping to teach the power and functions of the community government. In order to supplement her lesson, she used a set of flash cards, containing the necessary vocabulary for the students to use during their discussion. They were: *participatory democracy*, *citizens*, *code*, *decentralized*, and *empowerment*. Although the class showed no difficulty in reading the cue cards, I was intrigued with how *participatory democracy* and *empowerment* would be demonstrated. As the children listened, one by one Mrs. Cortes explained the words. The phrase *participatory democracy* was explained by the word *democracy*, while *empowerment* was illustrated using an example of the borrowing of funds from a financial institution in order to raise capital for a small business, empowering one to earn a living. Only two of the five words (namely *citizen* and *empowerment*) were to be the crux of the government lesson. Once she was finished with her lecture, Mrs. Cortes asked the children if they understood the meaning of the words, and all the students answered in the affirmative. She then checked if her students had read their assignments. Once again, the students answered, "Yes."

Mrs. Cortes proceeded to lecture on the materials the students were assigned to read. She mentioned the composition and functions of the community council, and the duties of its members. Using pictures, she explained how the council assembled in order to fulfill its main purpose—creating bylaws. Although she occasionally paused to ask if the class followed what she was talking about, each time, the students responded, "Yes, Ma'am."

When she reversed the roles, asking the students to explain to her what she had been teaching, the students remained quiet. Mrs. Cortes trekked on. I expected her to stimulate the variety of answers she claimed she tried to evoke: "In fact, one question I ask them, I let them respond in various ways. That's critical thinking." After the lecture, she checked for retention of information by asking the class questions about the information disseminated in her lecture. Most of the students' rote memories were exceptional.

The lesson ended with an evaluation exam: the students were asked to answer questions that were written on two sheets of manila paper taped to the blackboard. The two-part test first consisted of recall questions about the lecture, while the second consisted of paragraphs that outlined a co-operative project undertaken by a community council in the northern part of the Philippines. Working in conjunction with a national governmental agency, the main goal of the project was to irrigate farmland. This co-operation was not without its conditions. While the national government would provide the technicians and the materials, the community council must agree to provide the labour. The local citizens who could not work as manual labourers were taxed, either by way of funds or land.

Beyond these paragraphs, other information was provided about the community council that was neither spoken of nor referred to throughout the lesson. However, I assumed that this was meant to give students additional information about the duties of the community council. Upon reading the test the students were taking, I noticed some test items that were not mentioned nor referred to in the lesson. The class continued to write the test without asking any questions.

I took a closer look at the test the students were writing. Although most of the questions asked for a recalling of the facts, one of the questions required the students to make a value judgment: "Were government technicians justified in setting the conditions they asked of the citizen?" Of great interest would be to see how informed their opinions were, especially given that the paragraphs with which the students were provided, lacked pertinent information. For example, it did not mention if the community had ownership of the project, who had initiated the project, or if government intervention had been requested.

This question would have been a prime class-discussion, thus promoting critical thinking. I speculated that discussion may be purposely avoided at this time in order to allow the students to decide for themselves which side to take, absent the risk of being influenced by other opinions. If, in fact, this were the case, such a tactic would coincide with another of Mrs. Cortes' perspectives on critical thinking: "[Critical thinking] is giving the children, the children must decide if they're in or out. Like for example in an issue, but they are still young, they don't know." Attributing ignorance to her students' youth, she attempted to enlighten them via probing questions such as the following:

> If there will be continuous rally on the streets, what I applied to this learning is the economy of the nation. What will happen to the country's economy? What will happen, for example to those market vendors? They will have less customers because of the rally. They will lose their income. If you were the earner, if you will participate in the rally, so nothing will happen to the street rallies. What would happen to your family? Or if you were a store holder or an owner of a store, what will happen to your store? Your business will fail because you will have fewer customers. And then I just let them decide. I could not also let them share my view because that is only my opinion. So I did not tell them any more.

Although her intention was to help the students formulate their own opinions, the delivery of her inquiries may have bared her own opinion upon her students. In an acknowledgment of whatever influence she might have had over the students, Mrs. Cortes dismissed her thoughts as, "my opinion. So I do not know. Your parents might have other opinions." Within the Philippine culture, an expression of opinion expressed by an authority like a teacher is tantamount to a mandate that the students feel they must follow, lest they be shunned for non-conformity. Mrs. Cortes suggested that the protesters were merely expressing their own opinions.

The lesson's objectives were met through the transmission of information, but no critical thinking was promoted. However, when asked, Mrs. Cortes was readily able to comment on her views on critical thinking. For instance, according to Mrs. Cortes, an expression of an opinion was a form of critical thinking. She claimed that discussions on current events were mediums she frequently used to develop critical thinking. Furthermore, Mrs. Cortes believed that encouraging the students to come up with a variety of answers to a single question was another form of critical thinking. However, the lecture-style approach did not allow the students to demonstrate such variety. Finally, Mrs. Cortes considered awareness of and opining on an issue as another form of critical thinking.

Although no promotion of critical thinking was observed in her teaching, Mrs. Cortes was particularly proud of the fact that her students were bright and had no difficulty with what she believed to be critical thinking. She was unable to relate any of her experiences with developing critical thinking in slow learners because she said, "I do not teach slow learners, so I do not have any experience teaching them critical thinking."

Another source of great pride to Mrs. Cortes was her other professional responsibilities that she undertook only with smart students, one of which was being the adviser to the school paper. Complementing her advisory duties, she also taught a weekend journalism class where she again tried to promote critical thinking in her students. Mrs. Cortes was quick to mention that the students' parents give her an honorarium for her efforts. She acknowledged the problems she encountered as a coach, in a speech she delivered at the regional training program for school paper advisers, being the winning coach of the first place competitor:

> So as a sideline to my lecture, I talked on the joys and pain of a teacher-adviser because I said that it is really hard work because when you correct the written work of the child, the child will rewrite it. After the child will rewrite that, you will still see errors. Then they have to rewrite it again. So you have also to get a pupil who is also diligent because if the child is lazy, she/he will get tired.

Her dedication and positive attitude toward her work has led her all over the Philippines, taking her to National School Press competitions. These travels gave her something to look forward to and a sense of pride about her teaching profession. It was that same attitude and perseverance that she tried to bring to the promotion of critical thinking in her students:

> I'm used to this; it is our attitude that counts. If you really have the intention of being a good teacher, you want to let your children learn because we have the bible. We have what we call the PELC (Philippine

> Elementary Learning Competencies, the 1997 edition of the curriculum guide). So if it is really our desire to let, to impart quality education to our children, you will do everything to let your children know the basics, what is needed, what is for them to achieve quality education.

She shared a positive outlook for critical thinking in the Philippines, particularly because the Philippine curriculum (the "Bible" as she referred to it), mandated that critical thinking be promoted in the classroom. In fact, she believed that all teachers should share the same positive mind-set, "Attitude is a little thing that makes a lot of difference."

### *Mrs. Manalo's Story*

As I arrived to observe Mrs. Manalo's class, I was greeted by many familiar faces. The school itself was quite familiar, having visited here two years prior to bestow some sports equipment to children as a token of my family's esteem for aiding in our tree planting campaign. The low ceiling and sparse classroom facilities typified the rural classrooms where Mrs. Manalo had been teaching for over thirty years. But, oblivious to their simple surroundings, the children were actively enjoying their recess time.

While setting up my equipment in the classroom, many of the children broke from their play and curiously visited with me. The bell rang and in came a thrilled Mrs. Manalo. She was as excited to be teaching today as I was to be observing. In fact, during our discussion, Mrs. Manalo expressed her keen interest to learn more about critical thinking:

> It's not so popular here in the Philippines. I have not come across it yet,

> even in seminars about critical thinking. So I said that maybe, she (the researcher) should do a demo first. When she does, we will see what it is. We may already be using the critical thinking technique. Then we can say, "Oh, we are already using it." As of now, I'm not sure if I'm already using critical thinking. In my understanding, you can only get it from the children, you can develop in them the ability to think critically in the way that the teacher asks questions, in the art of questioning with the use of visual aids that will help the children to be able to talk, to say, to express their idea about what the teacher is asking for. Because I'm not so sure what critical thinking is, it would be best if she would do a demo first because they already do it where she comes from. Here, I'm not sure what it is. There has been no seminar on the topic. When Ma'am (the school district supervisor) told me about you (the researcher) observing me, I indicated that we should be the one to observe her first. Through her demonstration and we realize that we are not using it, then we can adopt it.

I was warmly introduced to the class, as Mrs. Manalo's lesson began with a review of the previous social studies topic they covered—a discussion about the different forms of government such as totalitarian, monarchy, dictatorial, oligarchy and democracy. Without breaking cadence, the children easily enumerated them, as well as identified which person or groups of people held the power in each respective government. The children's recitation impressed their teacher who proceeded to ask, "What do you think are the different branches of a democratic form of government?" The students came up with the following response: citizen, president, and executive. The teacher-participant referred to this part of the lesson as the formulation of hypothesis.

Mrs. Manalo continued on with the lesson. She wrote the three responded words down on the board while telling the class—for the second time—that the day's lesson was about the different branches of a democratic government and their functions. Mrs. Manalo then asked the students what they would like to know about the topic. An overwhelming majority of the students spontaneously mimicked her and responded, "What are the different branches of a democratic government and their functions?" She praised them and wrote the question on the board.

Mrs. Manalo's call and question, as well as the ease with which the students formulated the problem of their study, made clear what Mrs. Manalo meant when she said that she applied critical thinking in teaching through problem solving. She explained:

> Yes, especially in my class and the method that I use to bring this [critical thinking] about is through problem solving. So most of the time we are gathering data. In problem solving, I make the students do the work, even the formulation of the problem is conducted by the students. I do this during the motivation, and I just guide the pupils to formulate the problem. Then for that problem, the pupils will gather data to answer the problem.

Indeed, the children showed no difficulty at all in stating what the teacher considered as "the problem." She wrote on the board the words "Democratic Government." From them she drew three vertical lines suggesting that there were three branches of the government, but no explanation was given of what government branches meant. Now that the problem had been formulated and the hypothesis had been given, it was time to gather data. I noted, however that the problem to be solved was not a problematic issue; it was a simple factual question whose answer could readily be found. She broke up the class into three groups, who were assigned to collaboratively retrieve information about each of the government branches from the materials she provided. After each group readily picked a leader/reporter, Group 1 was assigned to read the information written on the blackboard that discussed the functions of the legislative branch of government. The blackboard outlined all of the information they needed.

Group 2 was given what Mrs. Manalo deemed a retrieval chart, with information written on it about the judicial branch of government. In fact, there was no chart on the page, only a couple of paragraphs, clearly outlining the judicial branch of government and its functions. Group 3 was asked to read certain pages of their social studies textbooks, which disseminated an equivalent amount of information about the executive branch. Immediately after being assigned to write a group report on their respective branches of government, the students diligently set to work.

There were a few students who seemed to be having difficulty reading the resource material. Although I offered my assistance, the students shied away from accepting. They meekly shook their heads and politely said, "No." As I observed the class dynamic, I realized that if, in fact the groups were working co-operatively, these students could have been helped by the others.

According to Mrs. Manalo, the exercise she was currently conducting was an example of problem solving. She explained:

> I give them the materials, books, charts and I put them into groups. Some would use the charts. Others would read the books, and another group would use a retrieval chart that I prepare. All the groups have the same problem, but each one uses a different way of gathering data. . . . I require each one to write her own answer based on the material. For example, this group, “You will read the topic that will answer your problem. You write your answer and give it to your leader. Then if the leader finds out that they have the same answer, so the leader will write the answer of the majority of the group and that will be the answer that will be reported during the reporting period. So each one has work and so I find out that they enjoy it because they help in gathering data. Just like the other group who is given a chart, everyone analyzes. Each one should have work during the group work.

Unlike her explanation, each group was given a different topic to research. All of the groups used a similar method of gathering data (reading the information given), although their reading materials were different. Not a single one of the groups discussed the answers.

Reiterating her methodology, Mrs. Manalo stated that she used problem solving to develop critical thinking. She also retorted that critical thinking was not problem-solving but the steps taken in problem solving promoted critical thinking.

> Problem solving is not critical thinking. Not really. [Students] are able to think deeper or in a higher level thinking through problem solving because when they are able to solve . . . even when they are just formulating the problem, they must have been involved in deeper thinking. . . . But through the art of questioning they are able to formulate the problem, which is used as the basis of formulating concepts after gathering data. . . . Formulate a problem, think for the correct solution, also formulate the concept or the, and the generalization is critical thinking.

The surface-level quiet belied a distraction amidst most, if not all of the students who were not part of the group giving their reports. Two girls were playing a silent version of "Tug of War" with a handkerchief; others were daydreaming; some girls were quietly chatting with each other; some of the boys were drawing or also chatting with each other albeit through hand signals and facial expressions. It was a trend that I noticed throughout most of the classes I observed. In an attempt to rationalize their distracted behaviour, I speculated that many of them might be hungry due to the close proximity to lunch and/or a lack of proper breakfast. Given the impoverished community, it would not be surprising for this to be true. Or, worse yet, perhaps the students were indifferently disengaged from the presentations.

After the leaders delivered their reports, Mrs. Manalo asked another member to reiterate exactly what was just said. Only, this time, the rest of the class participated by checking the accuracy of the report against the resource material. Eventually, Mrs. Manalo continued with the lesson. This time she drew three columns on the board. Each group leader was asked to write his/her report (word-for-word) on the board in one of the three columns. I found out that the exact same information was regurgitated several times over: once during the group work; twice, when the leader read it to the class; for a third time, when the class reviewed it for accuracy; and even for a fourth, when it was written on the board. The children's chatting had risen to a low roar. I had assumed why the children were so inattentive. The information was fed to them over, and over again.

At that moment, an epiphany dawned on me. In every classroom that I had observed, where the supposed problem solving method was used, the same information was given to the students several times over, despite being presented in somewhat varying formats. It was ironic that the teachers complained about running out of time. However, despite her own complaints about the insufficiency of time, Mrs. Manalo liked to use problem solving as a teaching strategy:

> I enjoy problem solving as an approach because I find it suited to their [grade] level. In the first place they are already in the intermediate [level], also because it makes them think, even just to find the answer in the material. They are given the material, just finding the answer. I think they are thinking. That's critical thinking to me. I don't know if that is

> critical thinking. But for me that's the best method for social studies.

Bearing these thoughts in mind, it was now becoming clearer why Mrs. Manalo used problem solving to teach critical thinking. She believed that critical thinking occurred as the children go through the steps in what she called the inquiry or problem solving approach. She further elaborated on her theories of problem solving and the children's development:

> That's how it is; developing in the pupils how to think critically through the art of questioning of the teacher, with the use of the visual aids . . . the child will be able to express himself because critical thinking is really deep thinking by the children. The teacher needs to make sure that the question she is asking is more complicated, high level.

Although I was heartened to hear her passion for developing her students' minds, as I paid closer attention to the questions she asked, all of the questions she raised were low-level questions.

As she continued, Mrs. Manalo pulled out a visual aid, a chart, to help her with the next segment of her lesson. The chart depicted the different branches of the government through pictures. The children suddenly focused on the lesson, wanting to see whose picture was on the chart. The executive branch included pictures of the country's president and military personnel. The legislative branch displayed pictures of senators and lawmakers. The judiciary branch illustrated people in court and the chief justice of the Supreme Court. To further the lesson, Mrs. Manalo launched into a lecture about the relationships between the various government branches. And as an evaluation, Mrs. Manalo had the students write a fill-in-the-blank test recalling factual information from the lesson.

Mrs. Manalo had a general idea of what critical thinking is and wanted to learn more about it. On one hand, she thought it was a strategy, a "technique." On the other hand she thought it was a skill, which was their ability "to talk, to say, to express their idea" about the topic proposed by the teacher.

After more than three decades of teaching, Mrs. Manalo realized that the government had an essential role to play in developing critical thinking. The teacher admonished the government for not doing more than providing textbooks to support the mandated teaching of critical thinking. She wondered, "Why have they (the government) not given a seminar?" Schools had recently been provided with new books, but she preferred the old ones because it had more information and had longer discussions. However, due to the inaccuracy of the information provided, the old textbooks were condemned and burned.

According to Mrs. Manalo, critical thinking had many roles to play. It was a teaching method, a skill in expressing one's opinion, a skill in formulating questions and locating answer or answers to a question. Or it could even be developed through her version of the problem solving approach, which relied heavily on the teacher's art of questioning.

*Mrs. Cruz's Story*

One of our car's tires blew out as we were driving to Mrs. Cruz' class for my scheduled observation. Unfortunately, the car was not properly equipped with the necessary tools to change the flat. After the car was towed to a garage for repairs, I was able to call the school district office and speak to the supervisor, who then relayed the information about my mishap to Mrs. Cruz. Once I arrived, my profuse apologies for delaying their class were met with sincere acceptance. In fact, they were all genuinely excited to see me.

Without further delay, Mrs. Cruz began. A boy was asked to share a news report in front of the class. It was about a presidential decree prohibiting teachers and students to join in any protest rally against the government. With such a controversial topic at hand, I foresaw this to be a perfect avenue by which to teach and promote critical thinking. I anticipated a spirited and fervent discussion. After all, this decree specifically and immediately affected all of the students' lives. I waited for the debate to begin.

However, an unrelated news story followed the first. No discussion was held; only a transition followed to another story. Mrs. Cruz's students were not given time to discuss the violation of the people's fundamental democratic right to express themselves. The common misconception, especially among those in the rural community, was that rallying and or protesting was a public nuisance and was, therefore, illegal. The other news story that followed was about a newly promulgated policy of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to convert certain agricultural land into a residential area. Mrs. Cruz asked the class for their comments. With some prompting, three students raised concerns about running out of places to grow food if farmland were converted to residential places. Given the rural nature of the community where many (if not all) of these students reside, these comments were not only highly valid, but also quite observant.

Mrs. Cruz, on the other hand, did not share the students' opinions, and expressed the opposing view – justifying DENR's policies. Mrs. Cruz did not lead the class in drawing the opposing view, let alone discussing the three students' comments. After hearing Mrs. Cruz's view about the issue, a young boy's conformist soft comment is heard, berating one of the three as a "show off."

In an attempt to understand Mrs. Cruz's actions, I thought that she was playing the role of a "devil's advocate" in order to encourage further discussion. Among the Filipinos, disagreeing with an authority figure is considered highly disrespectful, most especially in the rural areas of the Philippines. Mrs. Cruz's own words on her views on critical thinking directly impeached her own actions in handling the three students' dissenting opinions.

Like many of the other teachers I have observed, Mrs. Cruz believed that social studies was an ideal medium through which to promote critical thinking. She explained one of her perspectives on critical thinking:

> Well, for the strategy on critical thinking, for me, I use it especially in my social studies class because most of the topics are more on reasoning on the part of the children, so they can express what they have in mind and what is their [opinion], about their understanding on the topics or their view on the topics given to them.

According to Mrs. Cruz, her students enjoyed social studies more since they were given the opportunity to express their own opinions. Mrs. Cruz believed that she taught critical thinking in other subjects, but social studies remained her medium of choice. She elaborated:

> And so as I observe, when I use the critical thinking process, my children in my English class or in my science class, they are quiet more in those subjects than in my social studies because . . . they are free to say what they think about the topic. Anyway, I accept their reasons or their answers as whatever they think about the topic. That is why I am used to using that strategy or process because I can get the ideas of the children because they are free.

In essence, because the students believed they have more freedom to discuss issues in social studies, they enjoyed that subject more than other subjects such as English or Science.

As the afternoon continued, Mrs. Cruz led the class through a quick review of the definition of government and the characteristics of a democratic form of government, which the children recalled with ease. The new lesson was taught using her version of problem solving, which she also referred to as discovery approach or inquiry method. The class was divided into five groups, each choosing a leader/reporter, who received a question for the group to work on. The groups each got two sheets of manila paper, one to be used for the groups' reports, and the other containing information about the assigned topic. One group worked on the characteristics of a monarchical government; another worked on a communist government; the third looked up the characteristics of a democracy, which had already been studied as discussed in the review earlier;

the fourth group located information about a dictatorial form; while the fifth group was assigned to work on the definition of government, which had also been previously taken up.

Mrs. Cruz continued to inform the students that each group member was to work independently on the task and hand his/her answer to the leader. Not a single student discussed his/her ideas with the other group members.

Once completed, the leader wrote the group report on the manila paper, taped it to the blackboard and readied himself/herself to read the report to the class. In turn, although each leader did his/her best to read their reports, the leaders' voices fell upon deaf ears. A vast majority of the students did not even so much as glance toward the front of the class as the reports were read. They were busy distracting each other. No questions were asked, no discussion followed. However, Mrs. Cruz believed that the reports promoted critical thinking through collaborative learning. In particular, she liked to use collaborative learning in teaching critical thinking because she believed that, "critical thinking is somewhat a higher level of thinking wherein [she] thinks that only [her] fast learners can do it."

Mrs. Cruz continued to explain that, unlike the English class where students were grouped according to their learning level, Mrs. Cruz used mixed groupings in social studies so as to promote more collaboration between the fast and slow learners. She explained:

> But these slow learners, they give a little idea, but the ones framing the sentence are the fast and average. But [the slow learners] can still

> contribute; they are not just sitting there. I find it difficult for them to express [their ideas] because they cannot write them down and they cannot give a report. Though they have ideas, they have difficulty in framing the sentence. . . . But in social studies, they are very noisy and very active because I say to them, "Your recitation is very important. You should take part in the [group work] because the [mark] is for the group. If you don't share your ideas, you will not get a [mark]. So they keep even just listening to the others, as long as they are with the group. But during the activity, of course it is the fast learners who are doing [the work]. I think it is more relaxing for the teacher when I use that process because the idea comes more from the pupils.

In using what she labelled the discovery approach, it was the information from the manila paper that the students read to themselves that dictated their ideas, not the collaborative work that was expected to (but did not) take place. Although most students had no problems reading the textbook material and working on their own, there were several students who had trouble with comprehension.

The textbooks were helpful insofar as being able to look up information on a particular topic. Given the fact that Mrs. Cruz had only 30 students this year, she was able to provide each student with his/her own copy. The students in previous years were not so fortunate. At some point, Mrs. Cruz has had as many as 50 students. Bearing such a load, I did not hesitate to issue my praise: "I don't know how you managed 50 of them, 30 is more than enough." She told me that because the students might move to and from the community, one year's enrolment can be vastly different from another's.

After the presentation of all the reports, Mrs. Cruz summarized them by raising the same questions she had asked her students, and asking the students to reiterate the same answers. Her lecture continued with a one-sided dissemination of the negative effects of a communist government. Not a single word about its benefits was heard. The opposite view, although equally as one-sided, was heard about a democratic government. It was obvious that Mrs. Cruz was advocating for the democratic government. Although this could have been another ideal opportunity to develop critical thinking amongst her students, the lecture consisted only of the negative effects of communism and the glory of democracy.

Mrs. Cruz presented the same information for a fourth time. However, the only variation this time was the use of pictures to illustrate the same points. Adolph Hitler represented the dictatorial form, Queen Elizabeth II for the monarchy, and the present President of the Philippines represented the democratic government. Given the new visual stimuli, the students received this activity with enthusiasm. After being exposed to the same information four times in consecutive order, I doubted that any of the students would have any trouble identifying the different systems of government.

It was also no mystery as to why the teachers would complain, as did Mrs. Cruz, about the lack of time:

> Most often, I have that group work in my social studies class because I

> [won't] be talking so much because it's the pupils' activity. But gathering the idea, about 15 minutes of that. And then they prepare [for reporting], another five minutes, and we only have 40 minutes on social studies. And then another 10 minutes for reporting. And sometimes I cannot evaluate. It's already the next day [when I find the time].

When asked during the application section of the lesson, the students preferred the democratic government. The teacher then asked the students to express their opinions on the kind of government they would want, given, what she considered, the unstable and chaotic situation in the Philippines caused by student rallies and demonstrations against government corruption. A couple of students decided that a communist government and a dictatorship would certainly quell the unrest. Although I was encouraged to see students venture their opinions, given the lack of information they were provided, I thought that their opinions were unapprised.

In fact, a lack of information was a complaint that Mrs. Cruz held in concert with many other teachers I had observed. According to the teachers, the textbook issued by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports only presented one perspective, giving very little background information to both the teachers and students. Worse yet, some information were simply incorrect. No reference materials were provided for teachers in order to allow them to effectively teach the topics mandated in the curriculum.

Finally, a paper and pencil test was given to evaluate learning, which primarily consisted of the same questions repeatedly asked throughout the lesson.

After 20 years of teaching, Mrs. Cruz had but a vague understanding of what is critical thinking. Although she had heard of it and had read about it on the curriculum guide, she had not actually observed a lesson that taught critical thinking. She believed, however, that some of the activities she did in the classroom, especially in social studies, promoted critical thinking. She expressed her excitement on learning how to teach critical thinking. "I am very happy [to be] given a chance like this, to be interviewed in such a study. So I'm very thankful for that because I want to learn." She expressed the importance of developing the skill in the students, not just for the present, but for the future, too:

> I think [critical thinking] is a need; it's a great need. It must be developed upon the pupils because as they grow up, things happen that they need critical thinking, especially in practical situations.

However, she was unsure of what critical thinking is and she openly expressed her understanding of it in an effort to get clarification. She freely divulged her definitions:

> When I was responding to your [interview] questions, I thought that when the children are able to answer the [questions] given to them, that is already critical thinking. . . . Just because they are answering it in their practical way, in their experience, or they can answer questions through their experience at home, through their reading, I thought it was already critical thinking.

Mrs. Cruz recognized that critical thinking is higher level thinking, which she thought was the ability to express one's opinion and ideas, the ability to independently locate answer or answers to a question. The skill could be developed through collaborative learning because the group members shared ideas and helped each other. Through the exchange of ideas in the collaborative effort, weaker learners were helped. It was best taught in social studies because the topics lent themselves to critical thinking. However, she found that the social studies textbooks provided inadequate information and exercises to be able to promote critical thinking. She wanted "to get more ideas on how to teach critical thinking, specifically a list of question words that will help [her] formulate critical thinking questions."

### *Mrs. Koronel's Story*

Epitomizing the lives of her students, the social studies lesson was about the effects of internal and external immigration. Coming from military families, many of her students were no strangers to constant relocation. Due to the differing military postings, the children were forced to follow their fathers to whichever new station they were assigned. As a direct result, many of Mrs. Koronel's students' learning curves were greatly hindered by the constant relocation. Living with such transience, the children have had a hard enough time learning basic concepts, let alone practicing higher-thought processes such as critical thinking. Mrs. Koronel was, understandably, quite concerned for her students.

The remainder of her class came from rural, farming families who had desperately few resources. In fact, they had so few resources at their disposal that the children were all-too-often needed back on the family farm to help their parents with the crops. Mrs. Koronel's words embodied these students' dire circumstances: "[These students] belong to the lower category because of the conditions of the area, the rural area." She continued to explain that beyond the poverty in which her students lived, many of their parents were forced to migrate to and from the community in order to find work. These significant challenges led to poor scholastic performance. As their educator, Mrs. Koronel was able to pinpoint the problem:

> One problem is they that they lack comprehension, understanding of the question, of the lesson. The other is that sometimes they come to school with empty stomach. When they are already inside the classroom, some are yawning, some are, some are doing something else.

That day I was observing, Mrs. Koronel and her students were in good spirits. The children remained undeterred, laughing and joking with each other before the lesson started. To begin with, three students enthusiastically volunteered to participate in the first activity—they each read a story written on manila paper, taped to the blackboard at the front of the meagre classroom. After each story was read, Mrs. Koronel asked the students comprehension questions such as "What is the story about? Where did the family come from? Where did they immigrate to? Why did each family immigrate?"

Each of these questions was pre-written on strips of paper, which the teacher had creatively rolled up into balls and taped to the other blackboard. As she read each question, she unrolled each to reveal the writing. The children were entertained as they watched the teacher reveal each question. Many of the children were eager to respond. However, there were still a few children at the back who did not share the same enthusiasm. Despite their lack of participation, they still appeared to be engrossed with the lesson.

In one of the stories, the children were not able to identify where the family had immigrated from. Although not specifically named, the family's place of origin was described as a place where the family grew vegetables and crops to earn their living. I was baffled by the students' inability to see the relationship between their situation and that of the family in the story. Considering the fact that both the fictional family and their own situations were similar, it was quite surprising. Both fact and fictional families lived in a rural farming community, where crops were grown for sustenance and commerce. Even more startling was the fact that many of these students actually helped their parents farm the land, and the school itself was located amidst rice and vegetable fields.

Not a single student even ventured a guess. Mrs. Koronel continued to ask probing questions, giving them more and more clues, trying to awaken their cognition. At long last, a student blurted out "farm." The student's effort was met with generous praise and smiles from Mrs. Koronel and the students alike. This was a prime example of the mountainous challenges Mrs. Koronel faced. During our discussion, Mrs. Koronel elaborated on her thoughts.

> Yes, the children here, I find it difficult for them to give their ideas because most of the children here are low. . . .They do not know. One problem is they lack comprehension. Another is that the children do not participate with, in the discussion. There are only some pupils who can formulate [ideas]. But those who are not interested, they can't.

Mrs. Koronel emphasized the need for critical thinking. Her belief was grounded in the ideal that critical thinking was necessary for the students so "they can be independent and also they can become self-confident . . . to become responsible people." When asked what her understanding of critical thinking was, Mrs. Koronel summarized:

> In my sense, critical thinking is to comprehend a situation or question, to give a clearer idea; to explain the meaning of something. . . . In my class, I develop critical thinking through situations. I give them situations by letting them observe some happenings in the classroom that are reflective of real life situations. Then I let them give their ideas what they can say about the situations.

On one hand, Mrs. Koronel believed critical thinking to be the expression of an idea about a particular situation. On the other, she married the concept of problem solving with critical thinking, as evidenced by her own words: "When I hear that word [critical thinking], what comes to my mind is that you will be facing a situation wherein you really have to give possible solutions, possible answers to that problem."

Although she generally tried to use social studies to germinate critical thinking, she understood that other classes might also be used as appropriate media. "[Critical thinking] can also be done in some other subjects. But I think mostly, this can be applied in social studies." Her avenue of choice was social studies, which she rationalized:

> The situations are about our surroundings, the situation of our community; because there are lessons that are about families, about our country, about transferring from one place to another, especially in our place that we are near the camp, the military camp. The pupils are, they go with their father wherever they are; that's how.

As the lesson progressed, Mrs. Koronel then had the students restate where each family immigrated from, only this time, the students were to identify whether the immigration was internal (within the country) or external (outside of the country). Mrs. Koronel had the students write their responses on a chart drawn on the blackboard. The students' enthusiasm matched by Mrs. Koronel's obvious dedication, allowed for the activity to run its course without any problems.

Through this activity, the students were able to formulate generalizations that they applied to their own situations. The students' confidence was bolstered as they were able to provide their own examples of internal or external immigration. For instance, many of them spoke of relatives who have moved to other places within the country as well as abroad. It was heart-warming to share in Mrs. Koronel's success, if only as an observer. Her conceptual approach had led her students to a true understanding of the lesson's objective.

While discussing the lesson, Mrs. Koronel revealed her innovative strategy. She employed several different approaches when teaching a lesson, depending on the curricular objective, which she described:

> I use different approaches, depending on the situation, on the objective, if I should use or develop critical thinking or the conceptual approach wherein the [children] are made to read facts. Then you ask questions, checking out their comprehension through pictures and some other [ways].

She further related that her resourcefulness also extended to her strategies in teaching critical thinking. "I don't really use a specific approach. I just look at where my children can learn or what they can get out of my teaching."

Continuing on the theme of the effects of immigration, the class was then split-up into three groups: Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3. The teacher tried to explain the effects of immigration by moving the children around. Group 1 and Group 3 pupils were asked to find room with Group 2. Happily, the children easily accommodated the request, squeezing themselves onto the benches occupied by Group 2. Some children from Group1 and 3 were not able to find space with Group 2, so they went back to their original respective groups.

The students showed no difficulty in communicating the negative effects of immigration from the place of origin to the destination. For instance, the students pointed out that some of the negative effects to the place of destination were overcrowding, less room for housing, and sanitation problems. Regarding the place of origin, the students determined that some of the negative effects were school closures due to lack of enrolment, and increased unemployment due to lack of consumers. Despite the fact that few positive effects of immigration were mentioned, Mrs. Koronel's activity was a splendid method of developing critical thinking. The students were able to distinguish verifiable facts and value claims. They were able to determine the factual accuracy of their statements and the strengths of their arguments by actually seeing the physical effects of immigration. Not only did every student participate in this activity, each one was also given the opportunity to think critically. Mrs. Koronel was even able to spark critical thinking among the slower children in her class.

A paper and pencil test was the evaluation tool used to test the students' understanding of the lesson. The children were asked to match definitions in one column with the terms that were defined in the other column. This was a simple exercise on knowledge recollection.

Further in our discussion, Mrs. Koronel gave credit to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, by providing the teachers with lesson objectives that must be covered. However, she stated that the Department did not help in the promotion of critical thinking by providing them with incomplete textbooks. The textbooks did not provide exercises for teaching critical thinking. They only asked simple "what" questions. In an enlightened statement, Mrs. Koronel created her own suggestions on what the textbooks should include:

> The textbook given to us is *Ang Bayan Kong Mahal*, and most of the time the facts provided are incomplete and there are insufficient exercises included to develop the particular skill. That's what the book

> needs to include. There are questions that are problematic for teachers because the book does not give enough background information to answer them. That's how these books are.

Mrs. Koronel also criticized that the government had sponsored several seminars on various topics, but there had been none on developing critical thinking. With that realization, Mrs. Koronel expressed a strong desire to learn how to better promote critical thinking. Ever the optimist, she conveyed a profound sense of hope:

> "It might be [easier to teach critical thinking], especially if we're taught how to use [some materials], how to develop critical thinking, what method to use, what process to use to develop it. It would be easier, especially if I had the materials.

Although Mrs. Koronel believed that she might have taken a course during her teacher preparation program on how to teach critical thinking, after twenty years have passed, it was difficult to remember.

It was an inspiring privilege to watch Mrs. Koronel teach. The passion she had for teaching and the genuine concern she held for her students, unequivocally translated to those under her guidance. The respect that she had for her students directly correlated with the respect that the students had for her and for the other students. Her patience with their learning nurtured the students' own patience with their fellow classmates – especially with those who had trouble reading information from the board, or learning new concepts. The students were never rushed for a response, nor were they ever pressured for a prompt answer. Mrs. Koronel never failed to provide them with the time they needed to formulate their own ideas, and their own replies.

Her dedication was clearly evidenced by her continuous mentoring of new thoughts and ideas. As a true educator, Mrs. Koronel, herself was eager to learn. She was eager for feedback on her teaching and expressed a sincere desire to improve her strategies as well as her effectiveness in the classroom.

> I enjoy it when [my children] at least speak out, even if it is an insignificant idea; even though it might contribute an incomplete idea, as long as they can come up with a little idea. I try myself to pursue the development of critical thinking.

That which Mrs. Koronel stated during our discussion was matched by her actions with her students. Mrs. Koronel was well on her way to developing critical thinking among her students. Despite being confused about critical thinking and the inquiry approach, many of her perspectives on critical thinking were congruent with some of the critical thinking skills. As demonstrated by her success with the internal and external immigration lesson, many of her classroom activities lent themselves to the promotion of critical thinking.

### *Summary*

In this chapter I presented the teacher-participants' experiences with the teaching of critical thinking in social studies. In telling their stories, I "experienced the experiences" that the participants entrusted to me. Ever graciously and without consideration of censorship, they shared their thoughts, their philosophies, their beliefs and opinions with me. The data were collected through interviews with the teachers, their lesson plans, fieldnotes and classroom observations. The data gathered from each participant through the various tools were woven together and made into narratives. If only vicariously, I understood their aggravations and stymied efforts to better equip the students for their future.

# Chapter 6

## *Interpreting the Participants' Stories*

After reading and rereading, reflecting and analyzing, five themes emerged from the participants' stories. They were: the participants' understandings of critical thinking, the rationale for teaching it, the strategies they used to teach it, the problems they encountered, and the support or lack of support made available to the teachers by the government. The interpretation presented was discussed under each of the themes identified here.

### *Critical Thinking, as the Participants See It*

Defining critical thinking is a difficult task. Indeed, many authors cannot agree on its definition, a fact discussed earlier in this work. French and Rhoder (1992, p. 184) assert, "Attempts to define critical thinking have differed along several dimensions. It has been defined both by its form and by its function, including the skills and strategies it encompasses as well as the levels of complexity involved." The participants also offered various perspectives on critical thinking. Each one had her own views about it, although they all concurred in one respect, namely, that one has the ability to express one's opinion.

#### *Critical Thinking is Expressing One's Opinion*

Considering the complexities inherent in defining critical thinking, it was not surprising that the study's participants were unsure of what constitutes critical thinking, although all agreed it is the ability to express one's opinion, one's ideas. This was a corollary to another definition they offered—the ability to formulate ideas about a topic, a problem, a picture, or a situation. Mrs. Madrigal made this point:

> I think it is the way the pupils express themselves when they are doing their activity. For example, [in] my lesson tomorrow . . . I will show [them pictures] and I will let them examine [the pictures] and let them tell me what their opinion is about it. What they think about it; what is happening in the picture. That's my understanding [of critical thinking]—when they are examining something, they are exercising their minds; whatever they can think of, they are able to express it about the picture.

The participants' collective view was a valid one and was congruent with one of the skills covered within the scope of critical thinking. The teachers' definition aligned with one of Beyer's (1985) skills of critical thinking: distinguishing between verifiable facts and value claims. The participants' definition of critical thinking is validated by Beyer and is further elaborated by Norris's view, which is similar: "In order to think critically one must assess one's own and others' views, be able to produce alternative views and actions, make reasonable hypotheses and inferences, and be disposed to think critically" (In French & Rhoder, 1992, p. 185). Before one can express an opinion, an individual goes through the process of evaluating her own view and the facts that support or refute it. One also has to check the reliability of the source of facts. A person also goes through the same process when confronted by someone else's views. These processes require critical thinking.

Giving students the opportunity to take a stance on an issue was practised on a superficial level in the classrooms I observed, in most cases during discussions of current events. In one situation, for example, a student was silenced when he expressed a dissenting opinion. In another case, students' judgments were granted little or no value when the teacher opposed them with her own perspective. Such practices inhibited students' opportunity to critique and to dissent, and effectively silenced their points of view. It must be noted that children's opinions were often uninformed because they had access to inadequate information before they were asked to formulate their opinions and arguments. More often than not, only the popular side of an issue was discussed.

The students' right to convey their thoughts was effectively discouraged because, as a number of situations I observed revealed, teachers expressed their point of view before the children had the opportunity to formulate and express their own. Among Filipinos, openly contradicting an authority's analysis, such as that of a teacher, is proscribed. When a situation arises in which the class wants to hear the teacher's opinion, Martorella (1998) suggests that it is wise to do so when discussion has been completed and students have expressed their views. The teacher may play the role of "devil's advocate" to encourage discussion. However, students must be made to understand the nature of the role played by the teacher. Students should also be taught that when opinions contradict one another, an authority's position is not necessarily the best nor, for that matter, correct. Martorella (1998) emphasizes the following point:

> Moreover, in many controversies authority figures (and often "authorities" on the subject of the controversy) take competing positions. The most prudent course for all citizens is to seek out all points of view, to consider the facts, to come to a tentative conclusion, and to keep an open mind to new arguments. (p. 247)

A caring and safe classroom atmosphere is necessary to encourage students to express themselves freely. A classroom that reinforces critical thinking is one in which children feel free from embarrassment and discomfort when they share their ideas and arguments, no matter how simplistic or absurd. The teacher deliberately shapes the classroom environment by cultivating her own and students' supportive behaviour, and by providing challenging, thought-provoking activities.

### *Critical Thinking is Problem Solving*

Critical thinking was often confused by most teacher-participants with problem solving, which they also referred to as inquiry approach, or discovery method, or scientific approach. Mrs. Madrigal explained why:

> Yes, [critical thinking] is a strategy. It is a strategy because it is similar to the discovery method. Yes, it is similar to problem solving because [students] are given an activity to do. And it's up to them to decide what to do, as long as there are questions to follow and they will express

> [themselves] . . . write things about the questions—focused on many answers not just one, whatever they understand.

Their so called problem-solving method seemed to be a popular teaching strategy, such that 3 out of the 5 participants used this method to teach their social studies lessons. Although all the teachers who used the problem-solving method complained about running out of time, they continued to teach with this strategy. Mrs. Manalo rationalized her decision this way:

> I enjoy problem solving as an approach because I find it suited to [the children's] level. In the first place, they are already in the intermediate [grades]; also because it makes them think, even [if] just to find the answer in the material, I think they are thinking. That's critical thinking to me. I don't know if that is critical thinking. But for me that's the best method for social studies.

During my classroom observations, I did not see any of the teachers use the problem-solving strategy. The participants mentioned their familiarity with and frequent use of this particular method, but I did not recognize it in their teaching. After I observed all the classes, it occurred to me that what the teachers considered problem solving was actually locating specific answers to a question. In the problem-solving method they described, students were grouped and each group was presented with a question—not a *problem*—along with some reading materials in which they were to find the answer(s). What the instructors identified as the discovery or inquiry approach, or scientific method, was in fact a simple exercise that required students to locate the answer to a question assigned to the group. This was evident in Mrs. Cruz's statement, when she said, "I thought that when the children are able to answer the [questions] given to them, that is already critical thinking." Although the participants followed the steps that constitute the problem-solving approach, they were not, in practice, exposing students to the problem-solving method. For example, the "problems" teachers presented to their students were not problematic: they were merely low-level questions. In contrast, problem solving requires students to generate one or more options to solve a problem. In the teacher-participants' practice, however, students were presented with only one means to find the answer to a question: they received materials to read. While students made a decision about the best way to arrive at an answer using the inquiry method, my participants determined how their students would find the desired answer. The teachers practically pointed out sought-after answers through their use of information that was only partially paraphrased. This made it fairly simple for students to locate the response desired by each instructor. ***Problem solving*** means finding different ways to get out of a difficult situation or to reach a goal, and to choose which of several options will best take one there (Flower, 1981).

French and Rhoder (1992) echo Guysneir's recommendation regarding the distinction between the inquiry approach and the skill of locating specific answers to questions. They observe, "Guysneir recommends presenting problems to be solved, not questions to be answered, in order to involve and motivate students. He suggests that teachers use a 'well-defined, controversial problem'" (p. 176).

I propose that the use of problem-solving activities in schools gives students the opportunity to prepare for life in the outside world. As students get older, they inevitably encounter more challenges that require problem-solving skills. Schools train students to deal not just with the present, but with the future as well. If one of education's objectives is to enable children to become responsible citizens, it must assume—as a formative component in training students for this responsibility—the inclusion of controversial issues in current-events teachings and in the social studies curriculum (Parker, 2001), and education does so in conjunction with instruction in critical-thinking approaches and methods of problem solving.

One of the teacher-participants refuted the idea that critical thinking was equivalent to problem solving. Mrs. Manalo formulated her point this way:

> Problem solving is not critical thinking. Not really. [Students are] able to think deeper or [use] higher-level thinking through problem solving because when they are able to solve [a problem] . . . even when they are just formulating the problem, they must have been involved in deeper thinking. . . . But through the art of questioning they are able to formulate the problem, which is used as the basis for formulating concepts after gathering data. . . . [To formulate] a problem, [think] of the correct solution, and [formulate] the concept or generalization [is] critical thinking.

I agree that Mrs. Manalo was on the right track when she insisted she used problem solving to develop critical-thinking skills: the steps involved in problem-solving elements—such as requiring her students' formulation of problems would foster such skills. When formulating problems, making generalizations, and conceptualizing, one has to distinguish relevant information from irrelevant information, claims, or reasons; one must also recognize fallacies in a given line of reasoning.

However, I suggest that Mrs. Manalo's claim remains merely an assertion because my observation of her methods suggested a discrepancy between her understanding of problem solving and how it is practised. Notably, what she required students to prepare was not a problem, but a question. During my class observation, she effectively formulated the question for her class after conducting a review of a democratic form of government. Mrs. Manalo established the question's framework when she asked, "What do you think are the different branches of a democratic form of government?" She followed up this question with a parallel statement when she introduced the new lesson this way: "Our topic for today is about the different branches of a democratic government and their functions." Consequently, when the class was asked to formulate the question for the lesson, the students readily mimicked her.

### *Critical Thinking is Decision Making*

Critical thinking is also equivalent to decision making, according to Mrs. Cortes, who asserted: "[I am] giving the children [decision-making exercises] . . . the children must decide if they are in or out." She meant that children think critically when they make a decision about which stance to take on an issue. Decision-making necessitates critical thinking because the presence of alternatives and various choices require consideration and assessment before one can make a decision. To go through decision-making processes, an individual must involve various critical-thinking skills, such as determining the factual accuracy of statements and distinguishing relevant from irrelevant information, in addition to other skills enumerated by Beyer (1985).

It was reasonable and predictable that the teacher-participants should define critical thinking in many ways. French and Rhoder (1992) synthesize the following remarks from various authors:

> Stonewater views critical thinking as the umbrella and sees problem solving as "an important aspect of critical thinking" (1980, p. 34). On the other hand, Nickerson, Perkins and Smith see problem solving, "enhanced by a number of metacognitive skills" (1985, p. 110), as the umbrella and include creative thinking under it. Ruggiero (1988) includes both critical and creative thinking as parts of the problem solving [sic] process. Yinger (1980) views problem solving and decision making as the umbrellas with critical and creative thinking as essential elements. Beyer (1987) concurs: problem solving and decision making are both complex strategies requiring critical and creative thinking, which are not strategies. (pp. 151-152)

Critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, and conceptualization are all interrelated. To be able to solve a problem, one must understand what is called for. Creativity and critical thinking enable an individual to engage various means to confront a given problem. Conceptualization or generalization is required so one can make a decision about what steps to take to solve efficiently a given problem.

### *The Rationale of Cultivating Critical Thinking in Social Studies*

Despite the lack of clear or uniform views on critical thinking, the participants shared the belief that it is imperative that students acquire critical-thinking skills. Mrs. Cruz articulated her reasons:

> I think [critical thinking] is a need, a great need. It must be developed [in] the pupils because as they grow up, things happen that they need critical thinking [to deal with], especially in practical situations.

Mrs. Cruz foresaw the students' need to think critically not only in the present, but also throughout their lives. As relevant literature suggests, the acquisition of critical thinking may help students become empowered adults who may be better positioned and able to seek out economic independence for themselves and their families. Mrs. Koronel felt the same way, and she echoed Mrs. Cruz's point: "[Students must be taught critical thinking] so they can be independent and also so they can become self-confident . . . [they can] become responsible people." The formative educating processes within schools, which serve as civilizing institutions, must help children develop critical thinking skills so they can make optimal choices and manage their circumstances to benefit themselves.

Although participants tried to promote critical thinking in other academic subjects, they asserted that the most applicable venue was social studies. Mrs. Cruz noted:

> For me, I use [critical thinking] especially in social studies class because most of the topics are more about reasoning on the part of the children, so they can express what they have in mind and what their [opinions are] about, their understanding [of] the topics, or their views on the topics given to them.

The other participants shared the view expressed by these two teachers. They also held that the topics and objectives in social studies lent themselves to the development of critical thinking. This point of view was elucidated by Mrs. Koronel:

> Critical thinking can also be done in some other subjects. But I think mostly, this can be applied in social studies [because] the situations are about our surroundings; because there are lessons that are about families, about our country, about transferring from one place to another. . . .

The participants' vision of critical thinking in social studies is supported by Dewey (1916) and by others identified in the chapter on related literature in this study. They suggest that citizens need to become critical thinkers if they are to become participatory citizens of a democracy. *Participatory citizenship* is the extent to which a citizen influences public issues; it also represents the sustained opportunity a citizen has to address common issues that affect public good (Barber, 1989; Newmann, Bertocci & Landsness, 1977). In a democracy, the power rests with the people, so a country's citizens must influence the decisions made by their leaders. Glaser (1985) proposes, "[critical thinking] ability helps citizens to form intelligent judgments on public issues and thus contribute democratically to the solution of social problems" (p. 27). Social studies prepares students for civic efficiency and enables them to assume that responsibility; as such, students need to be critical thinkers.

However, practical constraints often dictate that critical thinking is not given its due in social studies lessons. Depending on the curricular objective a teacher seeks to meet, or the topic he or she tries to teach, critical thinking may or may not be employed. After examining the contents of the curriculum (See Appendix I), it did not surprise me to note almost all the lessons I observed provided little or no opportunity to practise critical thinking because, according to Mrs. Madrgial, "there are objectives that are asking only to name things, just to list them." Mrs. Koronel agreed: "I use different approaches, depending on the situation, on the objective, if I should use or develop critical thinking or the conceptual approach."

It was logical that teachers thought this way, given that the curricular topics and skills identified in the curriculum required only lower-level thinking. Although the mission of social studies education in the Philippines is to engender democratic citizenship, the curriculum does not encourage critical thinking and, in fact, restricts opportunities for children to participate in the discussion of public issues.

### *Strategies Used to Cultivate Critical Thinking*

Teacher-participants identified a number of strategies and frameworks in which to promote critical thinking, namely, problem solving, cooperative learning, questioning, and current events.

### *Problem Solving*

All the strategies identified were appropriate means to teach critical-thinking skills. However, there were discrepancies between what the teachers spoke about in the interviews and their actual practices. For example, as I described earlier, what they classified as problem solving was actually a "question-answer" exercise. Mrs. Manalo expounded on the process:

> Yes, especially in my class the method that I use to bring this [critical thinking] about is through problem solving. So, most of the time we are gathering data. In problem solving, I make the students do the work; even the formulation of the problem is conducted by the students. I do this during the motivation, and I just guide the pupils to formulate the problem. Then, for that problem, the pupils will gather data to answer the problem.

Mrs. Manalo appeared knowledgeable about the processes called for in problem solving and she applied them to her lessons, particularly in social studies. The participants' aim to expose their students to problem solving kept them on track with respect to the development of critical thinking.

In practice, however, students were presented with a low-level question, not a genuine problem, and they were asked to locate the answer from materials provided to them in the form of paraphrased information written on either manila paper, the board, or present on a textbook page. The alleged problems could be answered easily by reading the specified materials. There was no need for students to develop one or more solutions because the problem was merely a question that required a simple answer. The teacher predetermined how students found the answer because she distributed the data to be read to the groups in the manners identified above. Decision-making processes were not exercised by students, except for group leaders who decided for the group if information handed in by group members was irrelevant or relevant to the assignment. Consequently, only the group leader was able to practise critical thinking. Fisher (2003, p. 159) defines a problem in three ways; the first two definitions are most applicable to this dissertation:

> 1. something hard to understand, to accomplish or to deal with, such as *it is hard to understand why children bully each other* (Italics in original)
> 2. a difficult question requiring a solution, such as *how to prevent bullying is a problem* (Italics in original)
> 3. a question to be resolved by calculation, such as a mathematical or logical problem.

Engaging children with problematic questions that called for varied solutions or resolution, the exercise of judgment about whether the solutions they generated were supported by facts, ensuring evidence was not based on prejudices, and testing tentative solutions before jumping to a conclusion are all processes cultivated by problem-solving processes, which, in turn, advance critical thinking. To train children to become responsible citizens, they may be immersed in situations in which they grapple with critical issues.

### *Collaborative/Cooperative Learning*

Collaborative, or cooperative, learning was recognized by the teacher-participants as another strategy they used to teach critical thinking. Mrs. Madrigal illustrated how collaborative learning functioned:

> If you're really asking for critical thinking, I put them [into] groups. They are in groups. Then I give them activities. Every group has its own activities, and as a result the expectation is met . . . because they are having their own ideas to share with the group. They share their ideas.

Mrs. Madrigal meant that critical thinking was advanced through cooperative learning because, during group discussion and sharing, students learned to formulate their own ideas and share them in group interaction.

However, the participants' version of cooperative or collaborative learning did not foster teamwork or partnership. Although students were sorted into groups, a leader/reporter was picked for each group and was given a question to answer. This process did not result in a cooperative effort because group members did not interact with each other: no sharing of thoughts or discussion of ideas occurred. Each student tried to find the answer to the question assigned to the group. Perhaps the logic behind this was to make each member accountable for the fulfillment of the assignment. Once a student found the answer, he or she gave it to the leader to add it to other group members' answers, and the leader/reporter eventually read the group report in front of the class.

Interaction is key to collaborative learning because it is through the exchange of ideas that children learn from one another as they show care and respect for each other's judgment. When they have to respond to each other, the children's attention is focused on the task. While valuing each member's contribution to the completion of an assignment, the children give and receive assistance from each other through cooperative learning. Mrs. Cruz offered her observations about collaborative effort here:

> Slow learners, they give a little idea; but the ones framing the sentence are the fast and average [students]. But [the slow learners] can still contribute; they are not just sitting there. I find it difficult for them to express [their ideas] because they cannot write them down and they cannot give a report. Though they have ideas, they have difficulty in framing the sentence . . . it is the fast learners who are doing [that] work for them.

Mrs. Cruz indicated that in collaborative learning, "fast learners" might be able to put more into the teamwork process. However, each member's involvement, no matter how meagre was considered important.

The social climate in each of the classrooms I observed was generally advantageous for collaborative learning. Students each waited for their turn to recite; they were patient and kind to those who were having trouble responding to questions or reading a sentence. Nevertheless, they kept to themselves when working on a task, even when grouped together. I agree with the teacher-participants that group work is an important element in the development of critical thinking that may, ultimately, lead to more democratic and participatory citizenship. Giving children exercises that require the sharing of responsibility through expressly collaborative work may instil in them a set of values that may later, as adults, prompt them to be accountable for upholding the democratic principles of their country. A democracy requires citizens who care for and look after their private lives, and who are also concerned with the preservation of the common good.

### *Questioning*

The most common strategy teachers used in teaching was questioning. Questioning is a prevalent tool used for many reasons in every-day situations. It was one of the tools teacher-participants cited in their teaching of critical thinking. By asking relevant, penetrating, probing, and intelligent questions, teachers compel their students to think critically. Mrs. Manalo articulated this line of thinking:

> In my understanding, you can only get [critical thinking] from the children [if] you can develop in them the ability to think critically in the way that the teacher asks questions, in the art of questioning with the use of visual aids that will help the children to be able to talk, to say, to express their idea about what the teacher is asking for.

Appropriate questions can lead an individual to be reflective, to be thoughtful about one's world, and about the context in which one finds oneself. Mrs. Madrigal, another participant, did not qualify the kind of questions she raised, but she agreed that questioning could bring about critical thinking:

> I will continue to ask for more responses. [I would ask], "What else? Give me more answers. What else can you say about this?" Maybe that's one way of developing critical thinking. They will continue to think of other answers when they realize that their answers are insufficient. Maybe this is critical thinking, too. Give follow-up questions.

I suggest that the number of questions asked of students by a teacher matters little because it is by means of purposeful questioning that teachers elicit specific responses from their students. It is the *types* of questions posed that guide the students' focus to the topic at hand and, more importantly, cultivate the kind of thinking necessary to derive a nuanced assessment and response. Follow-up and probing questions were employed to involve children in more sophisticated thought processes.

Although the participants' opinions about questioning were well founded, asking higher-level questions was not manifested in their lesson. They tended to ask low-level, simple, unchallenging questions. Examples of such low-level questions were also found in the government-issued textbooks, teacher's manuals, and in teacher-prepared achievement tests and quizzes. (See chapter 4.) The propensity of teachers to ask low-level questions is not true only of the participants of my study. Parker and Jarolimek (1997) report similar findings:

> Research conducted over the past several decades on classroom questions reveals that teachers use a high percentage of questions that stimulate only recall of information that has been read or discussed in

> class. These questions are lower-level questions because they involve simple memory rather than higher-thought processes that require some manipulation of information. (p. 211)

This adverse reality can be corrected by all teachers who are able to ask questions that call for high-level thinking processes. If teachers are made aware of their limited skill in formulating appropriately challenging questions—if this is indeed the case—they can hone their proficiency with conscious, daily practice. Like any other skill, instructors must practice asking pertinent, higher-level questions on a regular basis to acquire the skill. As Chaffee (1991) points out, "It is by asking questions, making sense of things and people, and analyzing that we examine our thinking and the thinking of others" (p. 37).

### *Examining Current Events*

Mrs. Cortes commented, during the interview, how she brought current events into play in the coaching of critical thinking:

> In fact, when I read the letter, which you sent to ~~the,~~ our superintendent, when it comes to critical thinking, I think [current events] comes in because my social studies is a forty-minute period. My five minutes there is spent on current events because I allow . . . I let my children buy the newspaper everyday. So a newsboy sends or comes here to give us a copy. And then I will assign somebody to make the report on any news article about the day. So, with the recent happening in Manila, we have the impeachment process [of the current president], so the children are exposed to the [issue] because you cannot help but talk about it with the

> students because they would hear it from the radio, [from] TV. I think that's critical thinking because I let them understand about the situation.

Students are interested in talking about current events because it brings school life into a relationship with the outside world. Although it may be difficult to find the direct relevance of current events to the identified social studies objective, some issues deal with topics that are of interest to students and thus serve as a catalyst for the promotion of critical thinking. Mrs. Cortes's example drew an immediate connection to the Grade 6 social studies curriculum of civic education. She could plan a unit around the day-to-day development of the current issue.

In class, I realized that Mrs. Cortes's words did not accurately reflect her practices. After the news report was delivered, the news reporter asked recall questions of his audience, but no discussion took place. Mrs. Cortes believed that allowing the children to decide which stance to take on an issue could foster critical thinking. Because of their youth, however, she apparently felt the children were not able to make their own choices and, consequently, felt obliged to "make the students understand the situation." In doing so, she influenced the children's decision with her own biases and opinions. She shaped the children's perceptions and conclusions by asking them to ponder her remarks about the rallies held to protest government corruption:

> If there will be continuous rally on the streets, what I applied to this learning is the economy of the nation. What will happen to the country's economy? What will happen, for example, to those market vendors?

> They will have less customers because of the rally. They will lose their income. If you were the earner, if you will participate in the rally. . .what would happen to your family? Or, if you were a store holder or an owner of a store, what will happen to your store? Your business will fail because you will have less customers. And then I just let them decide. I could not also let them share my view because that is only my opinion. So I did not tell them any more.

Unknowingly, Mrs. Cortes shared her opinion with the children by asking them questions that carried her bias against rallies, swaying the children's opinions to her side. Regardless of her personal perspective, she powerfully influenced the opinions the students were encouraged to consider and constrained the conclusions they were allowed to draw about the value and effects of the rallies. Furthermore, in Filipino culture, an expression of opinion by an authority, such as a teacher, is tantamount to imposing that opinion on the children.

Mrs. Madrigal also seized the opportunity to utilize current events to cultivate critical-thinking skills in her students. She claimed critical thinking was developed through examination of current events "because when we share news, [students] are able to answer questions." In our conversation, she recounted a class discussion:

> For example, today [my students] were saying, "Ma'am, President Arroyo says that she has now resolved her problem. She won in the impeachment process." "What is going to happen to the president?" I ask. They reply, "Maybe she can now sleep soundly." Others say, "No,

> because her conscience will bother her according to my father." Others say, "'Why doesn't the president just step down since she has not helped the country, anyway?' our neighbour said." Then I said, "Is it true that she hasn't done anything? What have you seen?" Someone answered, "Yes, she had some roads repaired." Conversation like that goes a long way if it has something to do with the news.

According to Mrs. Madrigal, current-events issues could trigger stimulating discussions and encourage critical thinking in the process. The exchange of ideas represented in her example included those of a father and a neighbour, bonding the learning experienced at home with that in school.

A different picture emerged, however, in Mrs. Madrigal's class during my observation. During current-events discussion, the children's opinions were sought about whether or not to impeach the president of the country as a result of her alleged corruption. Everyone replied with a resounding "no," and alternative views were not solicited. Later on, when a child offered dissent on another question, Mrs. Madrigal stomped her foot and demanded that the child restate his answer. The child's right to express his point of view was dramatically disallowed, which caused me to assume that the teacher wanted the children's views to conform to her own and to popular opinion. This practice certainly discouraged critical thinking.

In my view, a debate on controversial issues provides an engaging and spontaneous way to develop critical-thinking skills. Issues are sufficiently familiar to students that they feel confident about giving their views. A given event may also be a topic of conversation at home, which some children like to share in school. When one engages in the discussion of issues of personal and social importance, one is required to determine the strength of his or her argument, to distinguish relevant from irrelevant information, to check the inconsistencies and fallacies of one's reasoning, to determine the accuracy of the data that support an argument, to distinguish between warranted and unwarranted claims, and to exercise other skills encompassed by critical thinking (Beyer, 1985). I cannot agree more with Parker's (1987) comments about current-events issues:

> There can be no doubt that the social studies teacher has a responsibility to include controversial issues in the current-events social studies curriculum.... It is the prime responsibility of the schools to help students assume the responsibilities of democratic citizenship. To do this, education must impart the skills needed for intelligent study and orderly resolution of the problems inherent in a democratic society. (p. 160)

Examination of current events is a suitable strategy for teaching social studies in Philippine classrooms, not only to develop critical-thinking skills, but also to address two specific Grade 6 curricular topics: "The Nation's Problems/Issues that Hinder Progress" and "Suggestions in Solving the Problems of the Country" (Department of Education, p. 15). However, examination of current events may prove most successful if it is taught more evenly throughout the curriculum and not only during the study of the topics noted.

In their effort to develop critical-thinking skills, the processes of problem solving, collaborative/cooperative learning, questioning, and examining current events were popular strategies amongst the participants of my study. Each participant mentioned her preference of a particular strategy over the others, although they suggested teachers deploy all four. Varying the use of teaching strategies may prove to be more innovative and effective, and may make lessons more interesting.

### *Challenges Encountered by the Participants*

When I think about the challenges encountered by the participants, as they sought to help their students learn, I am humbled. Their commitment was exceptional; they persevered despite the obstacles confronting them. Problems such as poverty, big class enrolments, the dearth of resources, and a lack of teacher training were experienced by most of the teachers in my study.

#### *Lack of Economic Independence*

Mrs. Koronel was familiar with the problem of poverty in her school community. She related that it was one of the factors that affected student learning:

> One [of the problems] is that they lack comprehension, understanding of the question of the lesson. The other is that sometimes they come to school with empty stomach[s]. When they are inside the classroom, some are yawning, some are doing something else.

When students come to school hungry, they are unable to focus on the lesson; they are lethargic and too tired to effectively absorb learning. When students are malnourished, their intellectual faculties suffer, too. The lack of economic independence creates other problems in the classroom, such as absenteeism.

Mrs. Koronel further explained that in their underprivileged community, the children's education was disrupted because they were often away from school, helping their parents on the farm. Some families moved in and out of the community to find work. The children tended to fall behind in school and thus lost interest in their education. Mrs. Madrigal also noticed this problem in the urban setting. She observed that children in her class belonged to squatter families and their parents did not give their children support or help with their schoolwork at home; consequently, the students performed below their ability in class.

To make matters worse, the low-ceilinged classrooms got very hot on a typical day, so that a teacher tended to carry a little towel around to wipe sweat from her face while teaching. Most classrooms had no electricity, and therefore fans and audiovisual equipment were unheard of. On two occasions—once in a city school and once in a rural school—my battery-operated tape recorder diligently recorded conversations as I interviewed teachers in the dark because the classrooms were not wired for electricity. During rainy days, some classrooms were flooded, so that students and teachers spent most of the day bailing water out of the class. In one of the city classrooms I observed, I noticed the walls were bare and run down, the windows were broken, and no instructional materials were evident in the room. The teacher confided in me that her classroom—without her permission or that of the school administration—was used as an evacuation centre by the neighbouring urban poor during typhoons and other periods of heavy rain. When a typhoon occurred at night, she expected to find a few families crouched in different areas of her classroom, and in adjacent rooms, when she arrived at school the following morning. She had to cancel classes until the families gave her back the classroom, which she and her students were then required to clean up after them.

Although students and teachers were not deterred by their classrooms' deplorable physical conditions, one could only guess at the kind of learning such an environment enabled. Teachers tried their best with whatever meagre resources they had because they could not afford to equip their classrooms given their small salaries.

Poverty is indeed one of the greatest problems in the Philippines, and it is one of the reasons why critical thinking should be fostered in Filipino youth. In related literature, some experts declare that those who are equipped with critical thinking are more likely to do something about their situation and to secure better futures.

### *Large Class Size*

The enrolment size of the classrooms I observed ranged from 30 to 47 students. The classrooms in the rural areas were so crowded that three students sat on a three-foot bench with hardly any elbowroom. Benches occupied most of the room and left only a narrow aisle to walk along. The classrooms in the urban area were equally overcrowded and cramped.

Effective learning is greatly affected by the number of students in the classroom. Mrs. Cruz considered herself lucky that this school year she has only 30 students, compared with last year's class when she had 50 students. Her next-door neighbour, the Grade 4 class, contained 60 children. I could not help but compliment the teachers on their efforts. It was difficult, if not impossible, to imagine how I would attempt to reach every single one of the sixty students.

The effectiveness of teachers in classes with such large enrolments is doubtful. Due to the excessive class size, teachers tended to teach by means of the traditional method of simply transmitting knowledge and assigning seatwork, the copying of notes, rote memorization, and other low-level thinking activities. Discussion merely comprised recitation of facts in unison and, consequently, did not promote the furtherance of critical thinking. This problem was beyond the teachers' control and could not be left to them to solve. The government is quite aware of this perennial crisis, yet it does nothing to alleviate it.

### *Lack of Resources*

Except for one classroom of five that I visited, I found hardly any resources for teaching and learning. The only resources available were textbooks for some of the subjects that were taught. In some instances, there were not enough copies of the text for everybody. In one of the city schools, Mrs. Madrigal disclosed that textbooks issued by the government provided useful but limited information about a topic. She often referred to other books that she borrowed from private schools. She also photocopied information from other materials for her students, which was costly. In fact, when I asked for a copy of achievement tests, it took the teachers a while to furnish me with one. I eventually realized my insensitivity to their situation in that I had not provided them with funds to cover photocopying charges. I did not realize schools did not have photocopiers at their disposal. As soon as I offered them money to cover costs, I received the tests almost immediately.

Similar conditions existed in rural schools, where textbooks were the only materials available for teaching any of the subjects. Unlike those in city schools, teachers in rural areas did not have the luxury of borrowing resources from private schools because no other schools existed nearby. Moreover, one had to travel several miles to gain access to a photocopy machine.

Textbooks and the teacher's manual were helpful for looking up information about topics, Mrs. Cruz boasted, but not for teaching critical thinking. She observed that books presented only one perspective and provided limited background information that was helpful to both teachers and students. No additional references were issued to enable teachers to teach the many topics mandated in the curriculum. Mrs. Manalo noted that she preferred the old textbook issued by the government over the new one because it had contained more information and longer discussion sections. I was aghast, however, when she related, "They were condemned and burned because some of the information in the old textbooks was incorrect." She continued to tell me that all the elementary schools in the Philippines had used the old textbooks for at least 10 years, which further stunned me.

While I appreciate the initiative of teachers who are required to deliver the curriculum despite the lack of materials, I believe the limitations of textbooks and the lack of references may be exploited in a limited but positive way to enhance the promotion of critical thinking. For example, teachers can encourage students to generate their own perspectives about certain topics. Caution must be taken, however, to ensure that students' views or accounts of events do not supplant those that are historically accurate. When students create their own perspectives about an event, the process can help them to think critically about biases that have shaped the single sanctioned perspective offered by textbooks. Using other approaches, such as issue-centred and constructivist approaches may compel teachers to make lessons more interesting and challenging and to encourage students to think critically. By engaging students in dialogue or debate about an issue, students may learn to evaluate the soundness and the validity of their arguments. Lack of information may be alleviated by inviting resource persons to attend class or by taking the class on a field trip. Taking the class to witness a community council meeting, for example, is more meaningful than reading about it in a book. The use of a battery-operated radio or tape recorder can complement current-events lessons as students listen to different views about critical issues. The problems caused by the lack of resources may be resolved in part by considering alternative methods of instruction that can be integrated in, and are appropriate for, class activities.

### *Lack of Training*

The participants affirmed that they were unclear about what critical thinking was, how to use it, how to develop it, and how to assess it. Mrs. Manalo corroborated these circumstances: “It’s not popular here in the Philippines. I have not come across it yet, even in seminars.” The teachers could only speculate about what it was, and they offered varied interpretations. Mrs. Cruz confirmed that she had heard of it and had read about it in the curriculum guide, but she had not observed a lesson that taught critical thinking.

Because they did not know what critical thinking is, it is simply unrealistic to expect participants to be prepared to cultivate it in their students; nor is it reasonable to suppose that they would know how to teach it. Mrs. Manalo admonished the government for its lack of initiative: “Why have they [the government] not given us a seminar?” Although the development of critical thinking among students is stipulated in the social studies curriculum guide, teachers received no training whatsoever about how to teach it. The teacher’s manual and the textbooks did not contain exercises that support the teaching of critical-thinking skills.

The teachers’ willingness to improve themselves demonstrated a concern for their effectiveness in the classroom. It impressed me that the participants were eager to improve their teaching skills. They were aware that they lacked the skills necessary to foster critical thinking and were grateful for an opportunity to grasp its basic tenets and explore them. Their positive attitude towards learning new things was gratifying.

Students and teachers inevitably confronted challenges while learning and teaching. Teachers talked about these problems, but they were grateful to have employment. Without making excuses, they tried their best and felt accountable for their students' educational development. Mrs. Koronel gave me advice: "You have to like your job, otherwise you will be miserable every day. It is not only a source from which I send my own children to school, it is a responsibility."

### *Government Support*

All the participants asserted that the government gave teachers little support to promote or develop critical thinking. Classrooms were provided with student textbooks, which were accompanied by a teacher's manual. (See chapter 5 for review.) Because students were able to retrieve ideas from the government-issued books, Mrs. Madrigal felt the government helped her teach critical thinking. Mrs. Cruz concurred, stating that textbooks were useful for providing information with which critical thinking could be explored. The curriculum guide was also helpful, according to Mrs. Koronel, because it identified for teachers the topics they must teach.

I agree that the government contributed little to help teachers deliver the curriculum objectives more effectively, which includes the development of critical-thinking skills. Classrooms were poorly built, and their maintenance was often funded by teachers' fundraising initiatives. Most schools did not have electricity, indoor plumbing, or running water; indoor toilets were unsanitary due to the lack of water supply and maintenance services. The deplorable conditions of so many classrooms were not conducive to learning.

Equipment for sciences, physical education, social studies, and other activities were rarely supplied, if at all. Mrs. Cruz wished she could afford to buy a globe to show her students features of the planet such as latitude and longitude lines and the geographic elements of countries. Basic school supplies that teachers needed to make instructional materials, such as manila paper, paper clips, and glue, were furnished by the teachers themselves. Because of the drain on the personal financial resources of teachers that these costs represented, teachers tended to avoid using instructional materials when teaching.

Reference materials, such as a dictionary, an encyclopaedia, maps, and audiovisual materials, were rarely available in schools. Storybooks and children's literature were rarely accessible to children, and school libraries were even scarcer.

Teachers are often held solely accountable for the students' educational success or failure. However, it is unfair and unreasonable to expect teachers to produce miracles when schools are afforded little in the way of public equity, when classroom sizes are unmanageable, when few instructional materials are accessible and those that are available are dull, and when the physical conditions of classrooms are not conducive to learning. Teachers, when given support for their dedication and endeavours will achieve more success.

### *Summary*

The views expressed by instructors teaching in rural areas were compared with those articulated by teachers in the urban centre, but they yielded no significant differences. Participants in both settings were unclear about the nature of critical thinking. Although they all agreed about the importance of upholding critical thinking in their classrooms, they were uncertain whether or not they actually promoted or taught it. All instructors held the same belief: they required training about how to cultivate critical thinking in their students. The obstacles participants encountered when they attempted to develop these skills were ubiquitous: poverty, the lack of resources, support, or training, combined with the limited ability shown by their students.

The advancement of even basic critical-thinking skills in classrooms was critically hampered by the elements identified in the participants' narratives. The physical classroom environment and the instructions established by the Department of Education, Culture and Sports greatly affected the kind of learning that took place.

Teachers who are able to provide a motivating and challenging classroom atmosphere that reinforces and supports the acquisition of critical-thinking skills may be the most successful in attaining the curricular objective. Teachers who model critical thinking and are knowledgeable about the nature of the skills will undoubtedly be in a good position to inculcate them in their students because they understand the processes critical thinking involves. The strategies used by teachers to teach any concept or objective directly affect the quality of learning that takes place. It is therefore important that teachers are endowed with strategies that can help them successfully promote critical thinking. Finally, government support is necessary to promote and cultivate critical thinking. This means financial commitments and the provision of sufficient instructional materials are crucial, as is a curriculum that stimulates students' involvement in their own learning processes. Ultimately, the objective is to graduate students endowed with critical-thinking skills who will act as responsible citizens and who can and will participate actively in the nation's democratic structures.

# Chapter 7

## *Recommendations and Final Reflections*

### *Recommendations*

Teachers play a vital role in the education of students. Teacher-related attributes, such as their commitment, attitude, methods of teaching, skills, and beliefs, are some of the factors that influence the quality of education students receive. Indeed, not only are teachers responsible in a significant way for shaping youth, they are also responsible, in the long run, for the development of community. However, while students are expected to develop critical thinking skills that they can apply in practical life, in their jobs, and in their communities, it cannot be assumed that teachers themselves are critical thinkers. And yet before teachers can teach critical thinking, they must be critical thinkers themselves: "Teachers, Freire and Horton [agree], must model rigorous thinking and compelling ways of being a scholar for their students" (Kinchloe, 2004, p. 21). Instructors have to be critical thinkers themselves in order to teach their students to become critical thinkers. Teachers cannot empower children if they are not empowered adults.

When conducting my research, I had a main goal in mind: to investigate elementary social studies teachers' experiences with critical thinking in Philippine schools. I tried to find out what perspectives elementary school social studies teachers in the Philippines held regarding the teaching of critical thinking.

Based on the findings of my research, I have these recommendations.

First, I recommend that a similar study be conducted in a different setting in the Philippines. In particular, the focus might be the affluent, private schools located in wealthy communities. It has been my experience that the realities of those teachers who work amidst the upper echelon are substantially different than those in the "barrios." Specifically, because I have taught in a private school, I am anxious to know whether or not there would be different results from this study, conducted with public school teachers, and results of a future study involving private school teachers.

Second, while the government, through the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, endorses the promotion and training of critical thinking in its 2002 social studies curriculum, it is clear that this ideological and pedagogical endorsement lacks practical and material follow-through. The government provides no training that enables the teachers to acquire the skills they are meant to teach. The government also neglects to supply classrooms with the materials required to impart the mandated critical thinking skills. Unfortunately, the government has left teachers, already financially strapped and constrained by time limits and large student populations, to make do with their own creative initiatives; instructors are also dependent on their own resourcefulness to find equipment and prepare the instructional materials that will help them impart curricular objectives. The many topics identified as mandatory subjects to be covered scarcely allow room or time to address critical thinking as a crucial skill requiring development.

The materials provided to instructors are barely adequate for the task of developing critical thinking. At best, the syllabus, textbooks, teachers' manuals, and handbooks bring about rote learning. Consequently, students' thought processes are not honed as instruments of critical thinking; they are turned into passive vessels for memorization.

Large student populations in each classroom further exacerbate these problems. Suffering from overcrowding, teachers' abilities are stretched far beyond their capacity to teach effectively.

My recommendations are practical and aim to reverse the concerns I outlined above. The Department of Education, Culture and Sports should provide teachers with the training and support they need, reduce the number of topics addressed by the curriculum to allow more time, resources, and focus to be brought to bear on the development of high-level thinking and critical thinking. At a minimum, the department must provide more stimulating materials for learning and reduce classroom sizes to enable teachers to address their students' needs effectively and thoroughly.

Third, teachers, I consider, are the greatest influence on their students' abilities to better their circumstances. It is my fundamental belief that the teachers, themselves, must be critical thinkers before they can teach their students to adopt this way of thinking. With the benefit of this critical skill, it is my sincere hope that Filipino youth will grow to become meaningful contributors to a globalized country like the Philippines. Therefore, I strongly recommend that teachers be made aware of the need to change their perceptions

In our world of accelerating change and complexity, a different type of thinking and learning is demanded of them; one that requires skills of self-evaluation and more intellectual discipline (Paul, 1993). They need to become conscientized such that they may become critically reflective of their location, their history, their practices and prejudices. They have to analyze, problematize and evaluate the socio-political, economic and cultural realities that affect their lives ( Freire & Macedo cited by Leistyna, Woodrum & Sherblom, 1999). A teacher must not only teach what is mandated of him/her, he/she must also be willing to go beyond oneself, and to criticize the mandated "truths."

One way of bringing about teacher-social consciousness is through the provision of an intervention program for critical pedagogy that can be established and made available through professional development activities, workshops, seminars, and courses in teacher-colleges and universities for pre-service and in-service instructors. The program should aim to provide teachers with opportunities to polish their skills and learn new strategies for the effective instruction of critical thinking and other curricular mandates as well.

The participants' total dedication to their students, in spite of their difficult situations, epitomizes perseverance. It is also my recommendation that teachers continue in their quest to find new ways to impart knowledge, attitudes and skills to their students, and seek to improve their own methods of developing critical thinking skills.

Complacency about the current conditions will not lead to improvement. It is my hope that teachers will make it known to school administrations and, ultimately, to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports that their present scholastic conditions are unacceptable. Paired with this objection to current conditions, teachers must suggest methods to bring about sustained change and improvement, and in the process remind political and administrative leaders how valuable and necessary effective and empowered teachers are to students. Awareness is only a beginning, of course; awareness combined with resources, action, and the support necessary to solve identified problems, generates critical thinkers and effective citizens, which is what the educational mandate calls for.

This study is important for a number of reasons. It assessed and qualified elementary social studies teachers' understanding of critical thinking. It heightened teachers' awareness of the importance of critical thinking, and consequently it might have advanced the development of critical thinking skills among Filipino youth, which could enable them to identify better the causes of the conditions they might be subjected to and, subsequently, to take action to either maintain or improve their circumstances. The study also sought to bring awareness to elementary social studies teachers about how critical thinking could better prepare students for global citizenship in this age of economic interdependency. Finally, I hoped the Philippine Department of Education, Culture and Sports would emphasize the promotion of critical thinking in Philippine schools as a result of reading my study's findings.

### *Final Reflections*

It has been more than three decades now since that memorable evening on the balcony of our ancestral house in Basey, when I overheard Tatay (my father) express his passionate refusal to allow BASWOOD Industries to log the rainforest of Basey. Nevertheless, my memory of that moment is still quite vivid. After having been practically denuded, it was predicted the rainforest would require four decades of rest in which to recover. Despite my father's best efforts, however, I was gravely disheartened to learn that commercial loggers have once again been given authorization to log within this precious rainforest. To make matters worse, another group has been granted free reign to mine the minerals around the rainforest. Such destruction flies in the face of years of protests.

With the government's failure to keep the greedy beast of destruction away from the rainforest, the profit-hungry commercial Titans have won a tragic victory. I began to wonder: perhaps our opposition to the devastation caused by commercial interests was not strong enough. Perhaps there was too few who cared to continue battling these Goliaths. Perhaps the inebriating intoxicants of industry were too much for the local governors to resist. Or worse, perhaps the reality of the locals' poverty overwhelmed the principles they once held dear to preserve the environment. Though I continue to speculate about the cause of this failure, the sadness I feel for our loss only fuels my fervent belief in the need for a more sustainable solution: education.

My research is merely a beginning step toward my ultimate goal of helping improve Filipinos' living conditions. Despite boasting of itself as a "democratic" country, the vast majority of Filipino citizens do not enjoy even the most basic necessities. Their social and economic existence is dependent upon perpetuating a seemingly endless cycle of destruction. I am not obtuse about the daunting nature of the task I have undertaken. It would be sheer ignorance if I failed to recognize the difficulty of achieving such an idealist goal. However, I will forever remain firm in my optimism that even the smallest change can lead to fundamental improvements. It is with this principle in mind, and heart, that I have approached my research.

I realize that tremendous effort is required of me to make even the smallest improvement in Philippine society. However, I am confident my journey of a thousand steps has begun with the right steps. I will continue to speak to the issues of environmental degradation, poverty, injustice and encourage teachers to employ different means to empower their students. I will pursue my advocacy for a better future by helping teachers hone their skills to teach critical thinking through flexible, practical strategies. Although intellectual competence maybe the initial goal, if students are provided activities that achieve no more than this objective, teachers maybe ineffective in nurturing student-thinking. In the Philippines, critical thinking maybe promoted in a philosophical context (critical pedagogy), which challenges and assesses existing social and economic injustices. It is my contention that when Filipinos acquire critical thinking skills through critical pedagogy, they will be better equipped to deal with the effects of colonization and globalization.

Given the upheaval over government corruption, the curtailment of citizens' fundamental rights and other government atrocities that occur on a daily basis, the Philippines appears to be in a tailspin of decline. Discussing the issues is no longer enough. Words must be accompanied by the right actions. More than ever, teachers need to understand how to promote and stimulate critical thinking—to become critical thinkers themselves, and to be better prepared to instruct their students.

The Samar rainforest is doomed to destruction, but I remain hopeful that concerned citizens will be able, at the very least, to pressure loggers to employ selective logging and replenishing practices. I am optimistic that students will eventually be taught the necessary skills to think critically so they can become more informed, be in a better position to improve themselves and their circumstances, and can become much better leaders than those currently in power. In doing so, they may bring prosperity, social and economic justice to the majority of the Filipinos.

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IBON Foundations http://www.ibon.org/

International Rivers Network
http://www.irn.org/basics/ard/index.php?id=rivers.html

Introduction to Educational Philosophy
http://www.msubillings.edu/shobbs/educational_philosophy.htm

# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I, ______________________________________, hereby give the researcher, Brenda

Basiga, consent for my child, ______________________________________ to be:

- video taped by the researcher and allow her to use the video tape as part of her dissertation, presentations and written articles for other educators.

I understand that:

- my child may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty
- all information gathered will be treated confidentially
- any information that identifies my child will be destroyed upon completion of the research
- my child will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research other than in the video tape.

I understand that the results of this research will be used only in the researcher's dissertation, presentations, and written articles for other educators.

Signature:__________________________________

Date________________________

The following are names and contact information for persons who may be contacted in the case of concerns, complaints or consequences:Researcher: Brenda Basiga—717 Wells Wynd, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6M 2K1 Phone 1-(780) 444-3821; Email Address – bbasiga@shaw.ca Supervisor: Susan E. Gibson, PhD., Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education, 551 Education South, University of Alberta,Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5; Tel. Phone 1-(780) 492-0545 Fax 1-(780) 492-7622; Email Address-susan.e.gibson@ualberta.ca

"The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEAREB at 1-(780) 492-3751."

## Appendix B

### Student Consent Form

I, ____________________________________, hereby give the researcher,

Brenda Basiga, my consent to be:

- video taped by the researcher and allow her to use the video tape as part of her dissertation, presentations, and written articles for other educators.
- I understand that:
- I may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty
- all information gathered will be treated confidentially
- my name will not be used
- no one will be able to tell who I am.

I understand that the results of this research will be used only in the researcher's dissertation, presentations, and written articles for other educators.

Signature:________________________________

Date________________________

The following are names and contact information for persons who may be contacted in the case of concerns, complaints or consequences:

Researcher: Brenda Basiga—717 Wells Wynd, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6M 2K1Phone 1-(780) 444-3821; Email Address – bbasiga@shaw.ca Supervisor: Susan E. Gibson, PhD., Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education, 551 Education South, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5; Phone 1-(780) 492-0545 Fax 1-(780) 492-7622; Email Address-susan.e.gibson@ualberta.ca

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# Appendix C

## Teacher Consent Form

After discussing with the researcher, Brenda Basiga, the full particulars of her qualitative research, I, ___________________________________, hereby give her my consent to be:

- interviewed
- observed
- video taped

I understand that:

- I may withdraw from the research at any time without penalty
- all information gathered will be treated confidentially
- any information that identifies me will be destroyed upon completion of the research
- I will not be identifiable in any documents resulting from this research other than in the videotape.
- I understand that the results of this research will be used only in the researcher's dissertation, presentations, and written articles for other educators.

Signature: ________________________________ Date________________________

The following are names and contact information for persons who may be contacted in the case of concerns, complaints or consequences:

Researcher: Brenda Basiga—717 Wells Wynd, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6M 2K1,Phone 1-(780) 444- 3821; Email Address – bbasiga@shaw.ca, Supervisor: Susan E. Gibson, PhD., Associate Professor, Department of ElementaryEducation, 551 Education South, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5; Phone 1-(780) 492-0545, Fax 1-(780) 492-7622; Email Address-susan.e.gibson@ualberta.ca

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# Appendix D

## Letter to Teachers, Requesting Permission to Participate in the Study

Date ____________________________

Dear ___________________,

Kumusta ka! (How are you?) I am a Basaynon, who is now residing in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I am doing a research on *Elementary Social StudiesTeachers' Experiences with Critical Thinking in Philippines Schools,* as my dissertation. This is one of the requirements I have to fulfill to obtain a Degree in Doctor of Education from the University of Alberta in Edmonton, and I would like to request your participation in the research.

In order to mitigate the effects of colonization and globalization in the Philippines, Filipinos must become critical thinkers. This is the premise that motivates me to undertake a study of critical thinking. I believe that having acquired critical thinking skills, the Filipino youth will be empowered and better equipped to positively affect their situation, and they will be able to function knowledgeably in a global environment that tends to exploit the naïve and the ill-informed. If instructors want their students to be independent decision-makers, they must provide their students with opportunities to think for themselves, to evaluate and generate their own ideas.

I would like to find out what your perspectives on and experiences in teaching critical thinking skills in elementary social studies classes in the Philippines by asking you questions in a one and a half-hour interview. I would also like to request to observe you teach a 45-minute to an hour lesson that promotes critical thinking.

I would appreciate it very much if you would agree to help me with my research. Thank you and best wishes.

Yours truly,

Brenda Basiga

The following are names and contact information for persons who may be contacted in the case of concerns, complaints or consequences:
**Researcher**: Brenda Basiga—717 Wells Wynd, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6M 2K1
Phone 1-(780) 444- 3821; Email Address – bbasiga@shaw.ca
**Supervisor**: Susan E. Gibson, PhD., Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education, 551 Education South, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5
Phone 1-(780) 492-0545; Fax 1-(780) 492-7622; Email Address-
susan.e.gibson@ualberta.ca

"The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at 1-(780) 492-375."

## Appendix E

## Letter to the Philippine Secretary of Education

Date____________________________

The Honourable Secretary of Education
Department of Education, Culture and Sports
Manila, Philippines

Dear Sir/Madam:

Kumusta po kayo! (How are you?) I am a Basaynon, who is now residing in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I am doing a research on *Elementary Social Studies Teachers' Experiences with Critical Thinking in Philippines Schools,* as one of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in the Department of Education in the University of Alberta. I would like to request permission to interview elementary social studies teachers in Basey, Samar and in Tacloban City for the data collection of my study. I would also like to request permission to observe and video-tape classes while the teachers are teaching critical thinking.

One of the goals of elementary social studies education indicated in the Philippine curriculum 2002 is the development of "critical and creative thinking towards responsible decision-making on issues or cases that are being encountered." My study will assess and qualify teachers' understanding of critical thinking. It will determine if the curricular content of social studies is taught in such a way that elementary grades children are provided with opportunities to develop critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, the research will bring awareness to the teachers of the importance of critical thinking and consequently, advance the development of the skills among Filipino youth. The results generated by the study can suggest strategies teachers may use to promote the acquisition of critical thinking skills.

Thank you and best wishes.

Yours truly,

Brenda Basiga

The following are names and contact information for persons who may be contacted in the case of concerns, complaints or consequences:**Researcher**: Brenda Basiga - 717 Wells Wynd, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6M 2K1
Phone (1-780) 444- 3821; Email Address – bbasiga@shaw.ca

**Supervisor**: Susan E. Gibson, PhD., Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education, 551 Education South, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5 Phone (1-780) 492-0545; Fax (1-780) 492-7622; Email Address susan.e.gibson@ualberta.ca. "The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For question regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB at (1-780) 492-3751."

## Appendix F

### Guide Questions for Interview

1. What is your understanding of critical thinking?
   Probe:
   a. What does critical thinking mean to you?
   b. What are some key words or ideas that come to mind when you hear the phrase "critical thinking?"

2. What does the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) say about the teaching of critical thinking?
   Probe:
   a. Does (DECS) think it is important to teach critical thinking in the elementary schools?
   b. How do you feel about teaching critical thinking?

3. What are some of your experiences in teaching critical thinking?
   Probe:
   a. How do you like teaching the skill? What do you like or dislike about
   teaching it?
   b. What are some of the difficulties you encounter when teaching it?
   c. How often do you involve your children in critical thinking activities?
   d. Do you design your own critical thinking activities or do you rely on
   some materials?

4. Would it be all right for me to come to your class and watch you teach a lesson that develops critical thinking?

5. How would you like to look at materials and lesson plans that promote critical thinking? What do you think of the idea of me teaching your class a lesson that involves critical thinking?

## Appendix G

## Confidentiality Agreement

Project title – Elementary Social Studies Teachers' Experiences with Critical Thinking in Philippine Schools.

I, ______________________________, the______________________________

(specific job description, e.g., interpreter/translator) have been hired to ______________ and I agree to:

1. keep the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the Researcher.

2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the researcher when I have completed the research tasks.

4. after consulting with the researcher erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the researcher (e.g., information stored on a computer hard drive).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ______________________________ | ______________________________ | ______________ |
| (Print Name) | (Signature) | (Date) |

*Researcher*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Brenda Basiga | ______________________________ | ______________ |
| (Print Name) | (Signature) | (Date) |

The following are names and contact information for persons who may be contacted in the case of concerns, complaints or consequences:

**Researcher**: Brenda Basiga—717 Wells Wynd, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6M 2K1
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**Supervisor**: Susan E. Gibson, PhD., Associate Professor, Department of Elementary Education, 551 Education South, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2G5
Phone 1-(780) 492-0545; Fax 1-(780) 492-7622; Email Address-
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# Appendix H

Letter to Parents/Guardians, Informing Them of Their Child's Participation in the Study

Date

________________________________

Dear ____________________,

Kumusta kamo! (How are you?) I am a Basaynon, who is now residing in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. I am doing a research on *Elementary Social StudiesTeachers' Experiences with Critical Thinking in Philippines Schools,* as my dissertation. This is one of the requirements I have to fulfill to obtain a Degree in Doctor of Education from the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

I would like to find out teachers' perspectives on and experiences in teaching critical thinking skills in elementary social studies classes in the Philippines. Your child's teacher ________________________________________ is one of the participants of the study and she/he has agreed to be interviewed by me for no more than one and a half hours. She/He has also given me permission to video-tape her/him while teaching a social studies lesson that promotes critical thinking. I would like to request your permission to video-tape your child, while she/he is attending ___________________________'s class that I will be observing.

I would appreciate it very much if you would agree to help me with my research. Thank you and best wishes.

Yours truly,

Brenda Basiga

The following are names and contact information for persons who may be contacted in the case of concerns, complaints or consequences:

**Researcher**: Brenda Basiga—717 Wells Wynd, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6M 2K1 Phone 1-(780) 444-3821; Email Address – bbasiga@shaw.ca
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# Appendix I

## An Overview of the Grade 6 Social Studies Curriculum

The Philippine social studies curriculum, entitled *Basic Education Curriculum (Makabayan),* which is written in the Philippine national language covers the curricular expectations for the elementary grades. The document is divided into six columns, one for each grade level from Grade 1 to Grade 6. The Grade 6 curriculum is contained on the sixth column, which basically lists the major topics and sub-topics to be taught, and skills to be developed in that grade level. A sample curricular content of the Grade 6 curriculum is presented here. The rest of the topics are stated in the same manner.

Topic I: Philippine Identity

Subtopic A: The people are an important element of the state

Skills:

1. Identify the characteristics of a population that will help make a country become progressive
2. Explain the importance of a healthy and intelligent populace for the nation's prosperity
3. Identify the country's total population
4. Identify the factors that affect population growth
5. Graph the population according to gender and age
6. Compare the rural population with urban population
7. Identify the distribution and density of population
8. Enumerate the reasons for immigration
9. State the effects of immigration to the place of origin and to the destination
10. Correlate the population of an area to the country's with the help of a map
11. Identify the peoples comprising the Philippines
12. Give evidence to show that Filipinos share commonalities as a result of events in the country's history and its geography
13. Identify the characteristics that make Filipinos unique.
14. Show appreciation for the equality of people
15. Show appreciation for the dedicated service provided by employees, and by government officials
16. Identify important Filipino traditions
17. Explain how appreciation would improve or prevent the country's growth
18. Conclude that national unity is the result of common values and beliefs.